NCLB: The Sequel

The law will change. You can help decide how. Page 30

FEBRUARY 2007

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ADVANCING THE Middle Ground

Is eighth grade the new 10th grade? With students facing pre-AP classes and choosing majors, it's looking more and more that way.

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features

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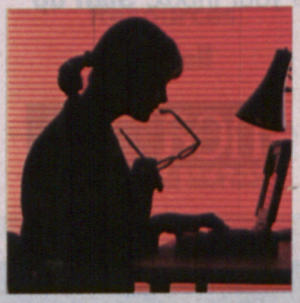
ADVANCING THE Middle Ground

Eighth-graders...they are not like us, and increasingly, they're no longer like eighth-graders. As middle school students are guided into taking more rigorous classes and even choosing majors, eighth grade is becoming the new 10th grade.

EDUCATION LAW

NCLB: The Sequel 30

The current incarnation of the federal education law expires this year. Armed with members' stories and input, NEA is launching a grassroots effort for change.



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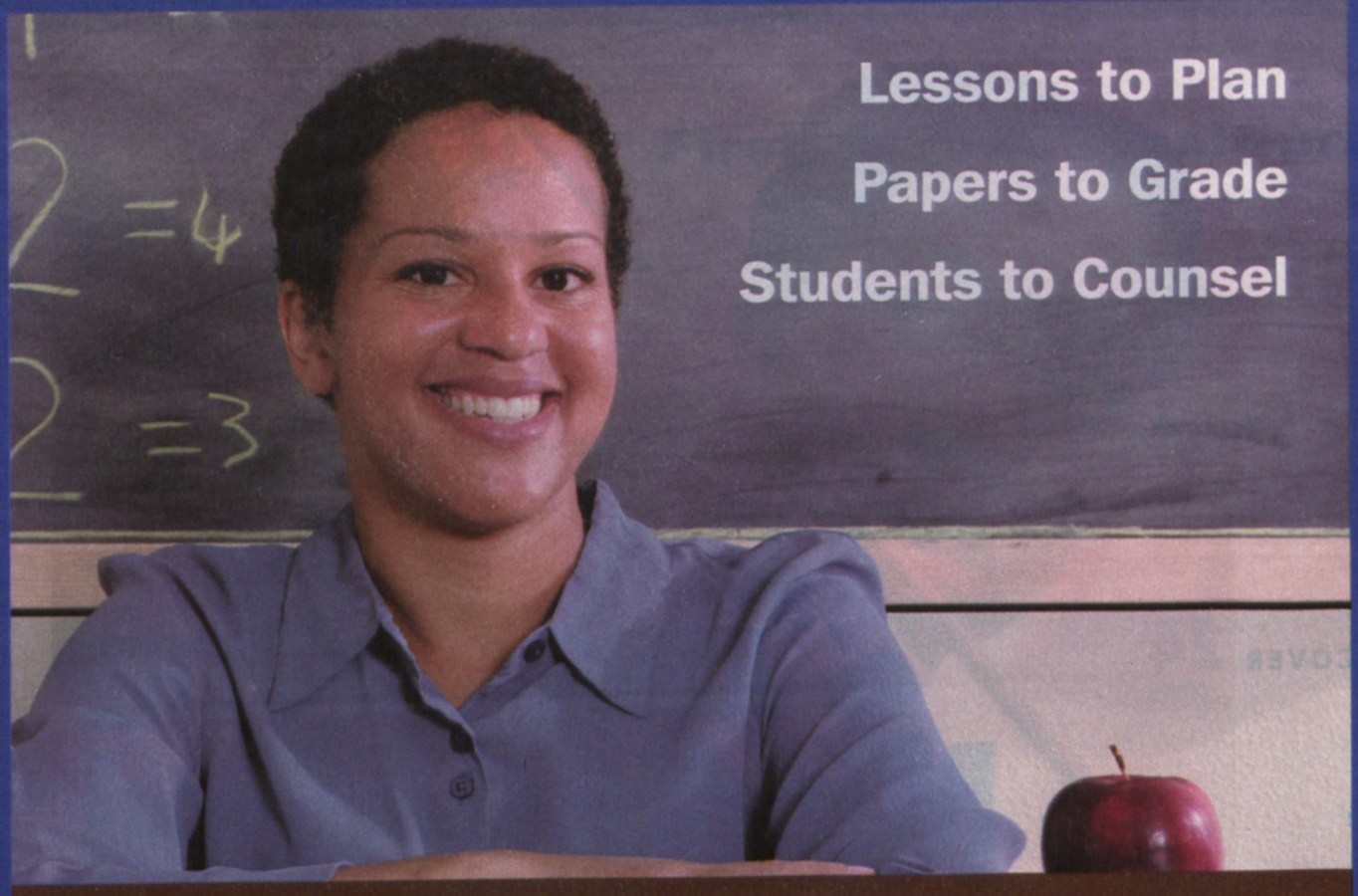

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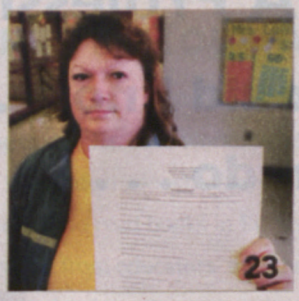

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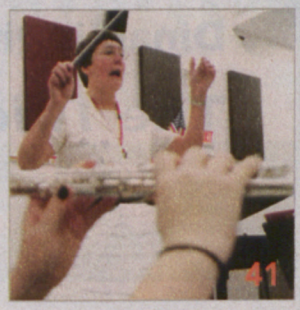

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When NEA asked how NCLB impacts your classroom, hundreds of you answered.

A CLOSER LOOK www.nea.org/ref?2324
Click through a slideshow of images from Flint, Michigan, and see what happens after the plant closes.

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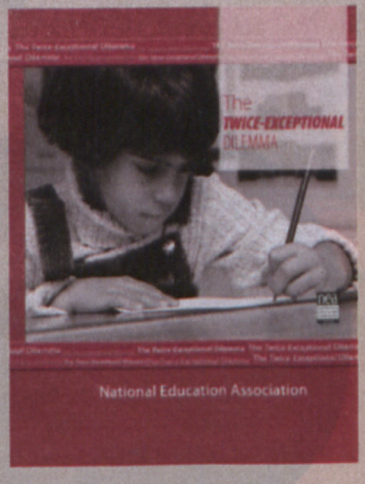

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Putting Words in Your Mouth

"Stop talking and finish your workbooks!" "Our school's goal is to help only those who may be able to pass." "We don't have time to read books in English class." ¶ All words straight from educators' mouths—and ones they never expected to hear themselves say. ¶ "It stopped me in my tracks and sent chills up my spine," Alaska teacher Heather Mildon says of her workbook-focused invective. "I used to be a great teacher," Stephanee Jordan lamented. "Last year, I realized I had become something else." ¶ It's all part of the legacy of No Child Left Behind, the current iteration of the longstanding Elementary and Secondary Education Act. (See more on how NCLB has affected educators on page 30.) The law's test-and-punish provisions have put these unpleasant words in educators' mouths, but now it's your turn to talk back. NCLB is due to expire later this year, and as Congress considers changes to the law, stories like those shared by Mildon and Jordan—and possibly you—could make the difference. Read more at www.nea.org/ref?2323, and share your own experiences there. ¶ Looking even further ahead, with NEA's upcoming 150th anniversary in mind, we're thinking about the future of public education. In big ways or small, where do you see the profession going over the next 15 years—or 150? Share your thoughts at the e-mail address listed below.

EDITOR MARK TONER
mtoner@nea.org

neatoday
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EXECUTIVE EDITOR AND PUBLISHER
Leona Hiraoka

EDITOR
Mark Toner

MANAGER, MANUFACTURING AND PRODUCTION
Bill Fischer

MANAGER, NEA.ORG
Lavonne Luquis

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WRITERS/EDITORS
Michelle Chovan
Mary Ellen Flannery
Sabrina Holcomb
Alain Jehlen
Cynthia Kopkowski
Con Lehane
Amanda Litvinov
John Rosales
Tim Walker

NEA.ORG
Paula Chavez-Talley
Sheala Durant
Bonnie Gardner
Joe Hammond
Cindy Long
Debbie Padgett
Brad Ritter
Karen Zauber

PRODUCTION
Marsha Blackburn
Christian Lopez
Alice Trued

ART DIRECTION
Groff Creative Inc.

ADVERTISING SALES
Rich Datz
rdatz@educationworld.com
(856) 983-7199

DIRECTOR, MARKETING & INFORMATION SERVICES
Lynn Coffin

ADVERTISING COORDINATOR
Branita Griffin Henson

ADMINISTRATION
Rizwana Asif
John Young

CONTRIBUTING WRITER
Sheree Crute

INTERNS
Truphena Choti
Natalie McGill
Mishri Someshwar

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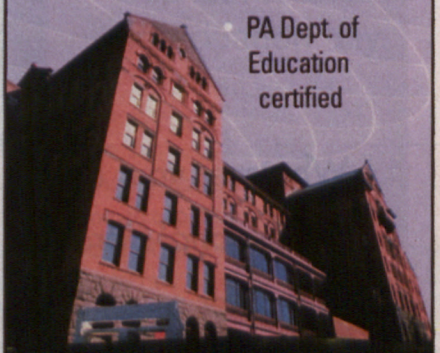

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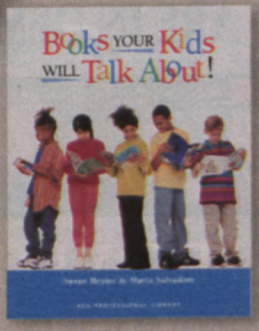

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Great Public Schools for Every Child

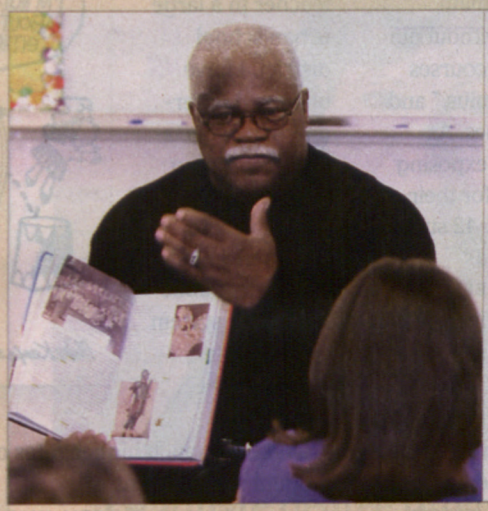
The Promise of a Fresh Start

A new opportunity to make ESEA/NCLB work for all students.

As Congress gets closer to taking up the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) this year, educators are in agreement that the law, more commonly known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB), is due for a facelift. We are not alone. Some 100 national education, civil rights, religious, and disability groups are now pushing for major changes to NCLB.

The renewal of ESEA offers the opportunity for a much-needed overhaul. And thanks to you, Team NEA, we are poised to undertake a delicate operation that will help the legislation achieve its original worthy objectives: closing the gaps in student achievement, raising overall student performance, and giving every child a qualified teacher.

Thousands of members have shared their concerns, frustrations, and suggestions to help NEA develop our policies and priorities for the reauthorization. The result of this input is NEA's Positive Agenda for the ESEA Reauthorization, a comprehensive blueprint for meeting the needs of students and those working in America's public schools.



The Positive Agenda is NEA's clarion call to make NCLB more responsive to the real needs of students from their first day of school to their graduation day.

—REG WEAVER

Early on, you recognized that NCLB was fundamentally flawed and severely underfunded. You told us how the law falls short in providing the promised tools and assistance that educators and students need. We listened carefully, and our agenda addresses these issues in several ways.

It shifts the focus from a punitive one-size-fits-all testing system to an approach that includes more common-sense and valid ways of gauging school quality and student achievement. Rather than measuring accountability in terms of test scores and sanctions, the NEA plan calls for giving schools credit for progress in student achievement over time and supporting educators who help students learn and succeed.

Five years after its enactment, the reality is that NCLB has failed to live up to its laudable goals. According to the Harvard Civil Rights Project, "NCLB has not helped the nation and states significantly narrow the achievement gap," and "NCLB has shortchanged those schools" that serve predominantly disadvantaged minority students.

To address this inequity, NEA's Positive Agenda embraces proven programs, like smaller classes, and advocates for additional targeted resources to help low-income and minority students achieve their basic right to a quality education. The plan's principles emphasize factors crucial to ensuring a great public school for every child—elements such as parental, family, and community involvement and engagement; adequate, equitable, and sustainable school funding; and a qualified, caring, diverse, and stable workforce.

The Positive Agenda is NEA's clarion call to make NCLB more responsive to the real needs of students from their first day of school to their graduation day. It promotes a comprehensive curriculum for all students with a proposed new grant program to help schools enrich and expand music, arts, foreign language, and other non-tested subjects. And it supports funding for adolescent literacy, dropout prevention, counseling, and an expansion of AP courses to satisfy the diverse needs of all students as they progress through their academic careers.

With reauthorization drawing near, we have all the ingredients we need to influence NCLB's future. We have a new Congress. We have a strategic agenda to improve ESEA. And most important of all, we have 3.2 million members who share a commitment to the vision of a great public school for every child and student.

It is imperative that we let Congress know where educators stand as lawmakers consider changes to this sweeping federal education law. If two is a trend and three is a movement, then Team NEA, you are an unstoppable force that can make a truly extraordinary difference for children, students, and public schools all across America!

Reg Weaver

NEA PRESIDENT REG WEAVER

Can We Compete?

Should American educators strengthen science and math education in order to maintain some sort of strategic edge over any nation that might someday be perceived as a threat to U.S. global hegemony? The cover story mentioned programs that allow educators from different cultures and nations to observe and learn from each other. This sort of work improves the quality of education available to all students, regardless of nationality. "Collaboration," not "competition," is the "c" word that educators ought to focus on.

DANIEL RUCH
Fleetwood, Pennsylvania

In my many years of teaching science, I found that many students are not willing to put the time needed in these subjects to gain a grasp of the material. Way too often, our society teaches us that we need to have answers instantly, and we expect that to be the case. Science topics often take days to fully develop, and it may take students several weeks to fully understand the material. This *is* science—test and re-test and keep modifying the procedure until positive results are achieved.

ROBERT MCCARTER
West Chester, Pennsylvania

The key to maintaining our edge is to integrate quality science and math within the K–12 curriculum without our expectations hinging only on courses called "Physics 401," "AP calculus," and other SAT-driven course names. As teachers, we must resist only exposing students to a single pathway for their futures. We must insist that K–12 studies encompass all knowledge areas.

BEN GUYOT
Sullivan, Illinois

LOOK, CLASS, I'M NOT CRAZY ABOUT THIS, EITHER.
NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND MANDATE
BUT WHAT REALLY FROSTS ME IS WE HAVE TO PAY FOR THE HOOPS.
PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Mike Keefe THE DENVER POST 2007

HOME BASE

The article "Rules of Engagement" (January) was interesting and informative. Both my children were educated in the [Department of Defense] system and have gone on to be successful adults. As a teacher in a large urban school district, I have observed differences in expectations regarding behavior and discipline and have concluded that if the public education system was operated more like the DoDEA, we would have much higher rates of student achievement.

RUSSELL WADSWORTH
Sacramento, California

My wife and I have an active duty career son in the Marines who was stationed at Camp Lejeune several years ago. We recently heard a retired Army general say that the Army and Marines are at war but the rest of the country is not, since we seldom give those that serve us any thought. Any story that calls attention to the difficulties that military families, schools, and communities face will help the nation to realize what a challenging situation our military families are in.

CHARLES AND LOUISE KESTERSON
LeGrand, Iowa

A ROTTEN CORE

"State of the Arts" (January) illustrates how a discipline deemed a "core subject" in the No Child Left Behind law is actually being dismissed. As an elementary art teacher, I was ecstatic that the arts were included when the law was

CYBER-COMMENTARY

ONE SIZE FITS ALL

Many concerned colleagues have made different suggestions on how to close the achievement gap. One that has not been extensively evaluated is how a standardized curriculum could help. Curriculum is the roadmap to student achievement. Yet, only few states, if any, can boast of a uniform curriculum being applied in all its schools to all subjects and grade levels. Without a uniform curriculum, expectation of equal achievement amongst students becomes an illusion.

HIGH SCHOOL Á LA CARTE

I am a believer that we ought to issue diplomas after 10th grade. At that point, students can choose whether to continue in high school as college preparation, or to attend a technical school, or to enter the workforce. This would eliminate those don't-wanna-be-there students. The college-bound can learn at their own pace, the tech-bound are freed two years early to pursue their own careers, and the non-scholars are freed two years early to start jobs.

—FROM THE NEA.ORG DISCUSSION BOARDS

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first unveiled. As time progressed, however, it became apparent that this inclusion means little.

The disciplines that are being reduced or eliminated are the ones for which there are no standardized tests. This makes art, music, physical education, and other "unimportant" subjects easy targets.

KATE ANELLO
Kettering, Ohio

BAD MEDICINE

The burden of medical care falling on education support professionals is a liability nightmare just waiting to happen ("A Band-Aid Solution," January). Who protects the person who accidentally gives a student the wrong inhaler or medication?

VIRGINIA WILKINS
Denver, Colorado

ASSEMBLY LINE

I just want to commiserate and empathize with Faye Wagoner regarding her school's struggle with NCLB standards ("Last Bell," January). We will be graduating a group of robots who will not be able to think nor analyze unless they are programmed. There will be no creativity and no independent thinking and discovery.

Young teachers who have the calling to teach are finding themselves being forced to follow a routine format that has nothing to do with real instruction.

DIANE DIAZ
Whittier, California

LET'S TALK

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MEMBER IN THE NEWS

"HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUTS ARE more likely to live in poverty... more likely to become incarcerated...more likely to experience alcoholism and drug abuse, and more likely to have children...who will drop out of school.... These are not preordained outcomes for every individual public school dropout, but they are the statistical facts that will not go away just because we don't like them."

EDUARDO HOLGUÍN, PRESIDENT, NEA-NEW MEXICO, *Valencia County News-Bulletin*

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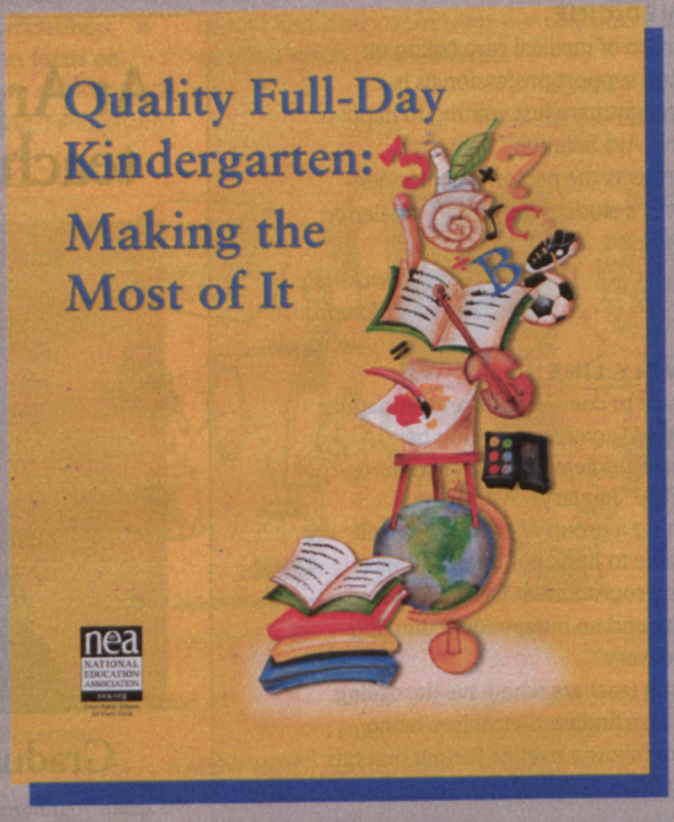

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An Unappreciated IDEA

Special educators are taking on two big laws for their students—IDEA needs more funding and NCLB needs more fairness.

NANCY MILLER, an elementary special education teacher in Illinois, had a third-grader last year who couldn't read the word "the." Her self-esteem was poor. Other kids teased. But Miller spent lots of time working on that self-esteem, as well as those reading skills, and the student improved tremendously. That is, until the Illinois state test.

"You *lied* to me!" the student said, sobbing at her desk.

"What do you mean?" Miller asked, appalled.

"I *am* too stupid!"

For this one little girl, three days of tests ruined an entire year of instruction. How many more should also face purposeless humiliation? The inappropriate testing of special education students, as required by the No Child Left Behind law (NCLB), should be eliminated, says NEA specialist Patti Ralabate. And, as Congress re-examines the law this year, NEA is gearing up for battle (see "NCLB: The Sequel," page 30).

Students with disabilities should be assessed with a student-growth model, so that their improvement can be recognized—as well as the efforts of their teachers. "It's more fair and more appropriate," Ralabate says.

The law also requires onerous certificates from special education teachers to consider them "highly qualified"—for example, a middle school educator who teaches multiple subjects would need multiple subject certificates, as well as a special education certificate. (Talk about expensive. And time-consuming!) Meanwhile, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), sets out more reasonable requirements, which states ignore.

And we could go on about funding...IDEA's promise—that the federal government will pay 40 percent of the cost of special education—has never been kept. (Congress now funds 18 percent.) And, under the President's proposed 2007 budget, the federal share would fall to 17 percent.

More information is available at www.nea.org/lac. While there, lend your support to NCLB reform bills, as well as the IDEA Full Funding Act.

12 GERM FACTORIES

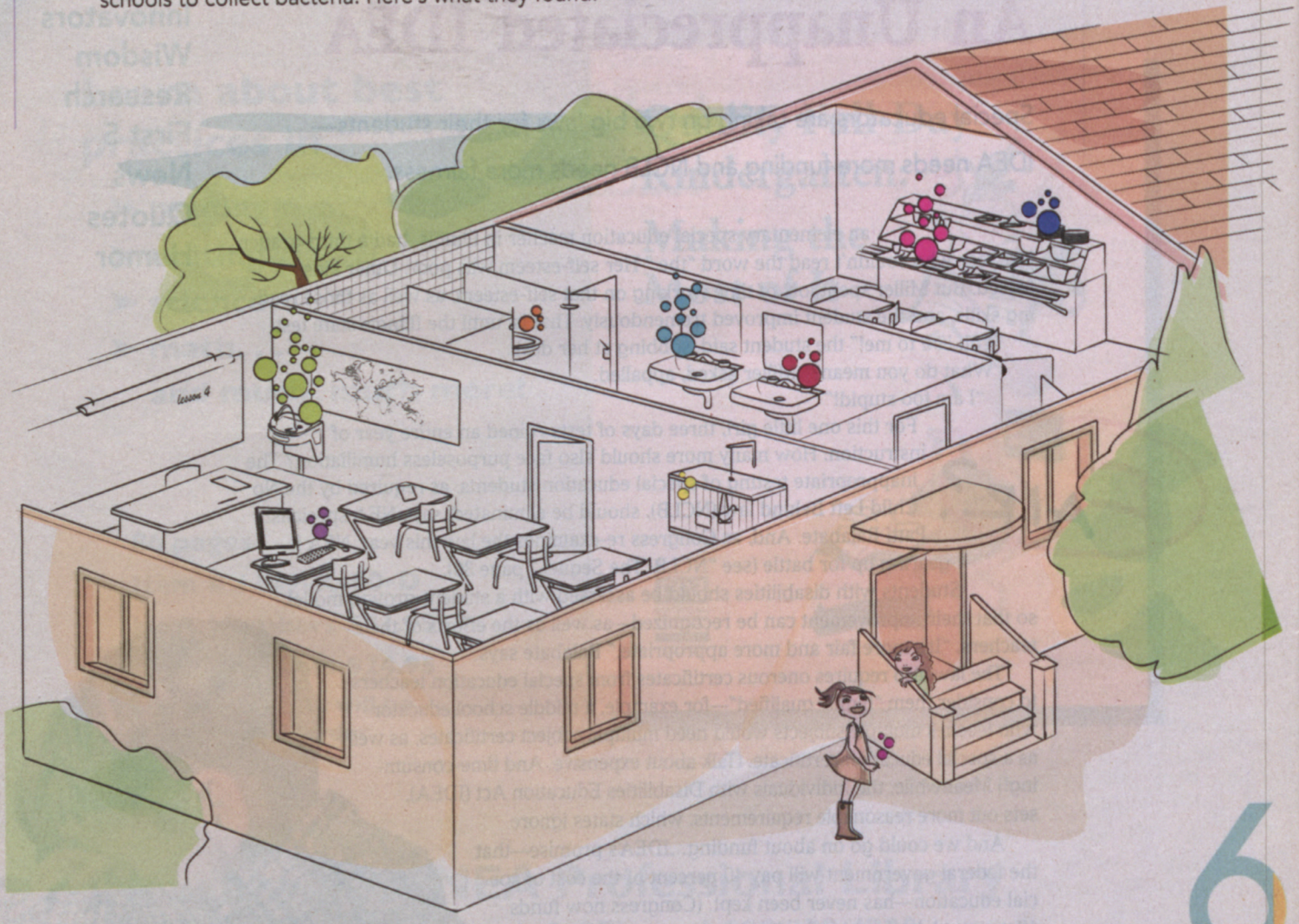
14 SWEETS NO MORE?

16 FINEST TEACHER–SONGWRITER

PHOTO: PHOTODISC

Where the Germs Are

WITH THE SEASON of sneezing and sniffling well upon us, it might be a good idea to look at the germ factories that call your classroom home. Last year, the non-profit NSF International took its microscope to two Michigan elementary schools to collect bacteria. Here's what they found.



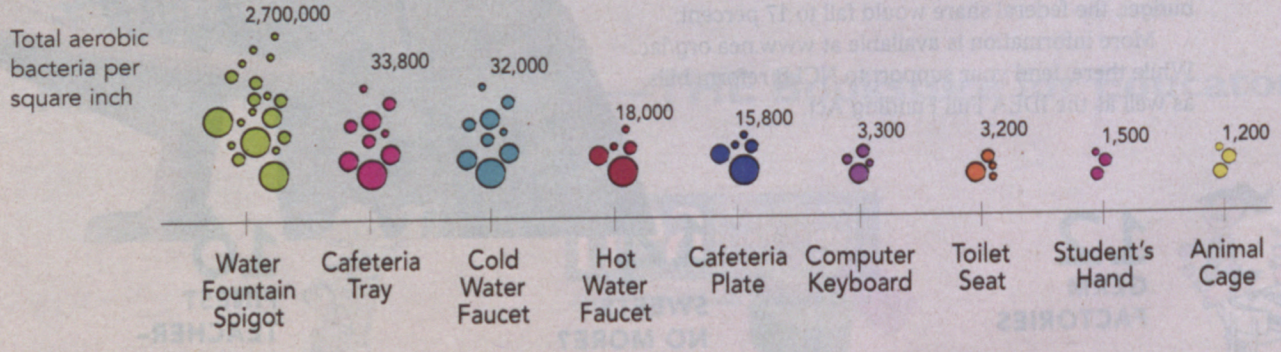


ILLUSTRATION: SYLVIE PINSONNEAUX

When Silence is Golden

A MASSACHUSETTS-BASED media company has been getting lots of static recently over its efforts to bring commercial radio to school buses. BusRadio, which promises a menu of kid-friendly music, news, and advertisements, plus a share of its revenues for school districts, has been tuned out of most districts that initially showed interest.

BusRadio touts its programming as a "behavior tool" and an alternative to foul-mouthed morning radio shows. But its advertising ran afoul of parents and public advocates. "It just creates these materialistic behaviors," said one Massachusetts mom. More than 100 child-advocacy groups agreed—and asked advertisers and ad agencies to also turn it off.

One bus driver near Boston, who carries an MP3 player, also put up her antenna. When her students act up, "They are treated to such gems as...*Camelot*," she told *The Boston Globe*. "My singing along is a definite deterrent....Music handled correctly can be a wonderful asset. [But] advertising serves only the purposes of the advertiser."

[STATISTIC]
The percentage of **TEACHERS** who say they don't have enough **TIME** to help individual students.

SOURCE: METLIFE SURVEY OF THE AMERICAN TEACHER 2006

Teacher Power

PICK UP A POLITICAL SIGN—are you comfortable marching at rallies? Standing up in front of others? If you're thinking, "No, it doesn't really make a difference anyway," think again. Your presence—the face of a teacher with a message—has an impact.

Last November, the Jefferson County Teachers Association (JCTA) in Louisville, Kentucky, proved just that as they ushered all of their recommended school board candidates into office. Their secret? They knew that people really do listen to teachers—and they knew it for a fact, because they had tested it scientifically and got inspiring results.

In a prior election, JCTA was working on two races, one in an affluent area, one blue collar. In each district, JCTA sent teachers to hold signs at half of the polling places, randomly chosen. The signs told voters which candidates had earned teachers' support.

The encouraging results: About 10 percent more votes for the teachers' candidates in precincts where teachers held signs.

BUS PHOTO: RICHARD THORNTON; ILLUSTRATION: BRUCE

Notepad

More Pay, but What Cost?

Teachers should be paid about $100,000 annually, but give up their pensions, according to a report by the New Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce. With global competitiveness in mind, the panel called for radical changes in public schools. (Like this: More kids should leave school after 10th-grade and go to trade schools or colleges, and more school districts should be run by private companies.)

The report "has shed light on some very real issues," said NEA President Reg Weaver. "However, we urge caution in calling for drastic changes that could potentially disenfranchise poorer communities and eliminate community voices in the reform conversation." Also, he said, while teachers should be paid more, they also deserve safe retirement plans.

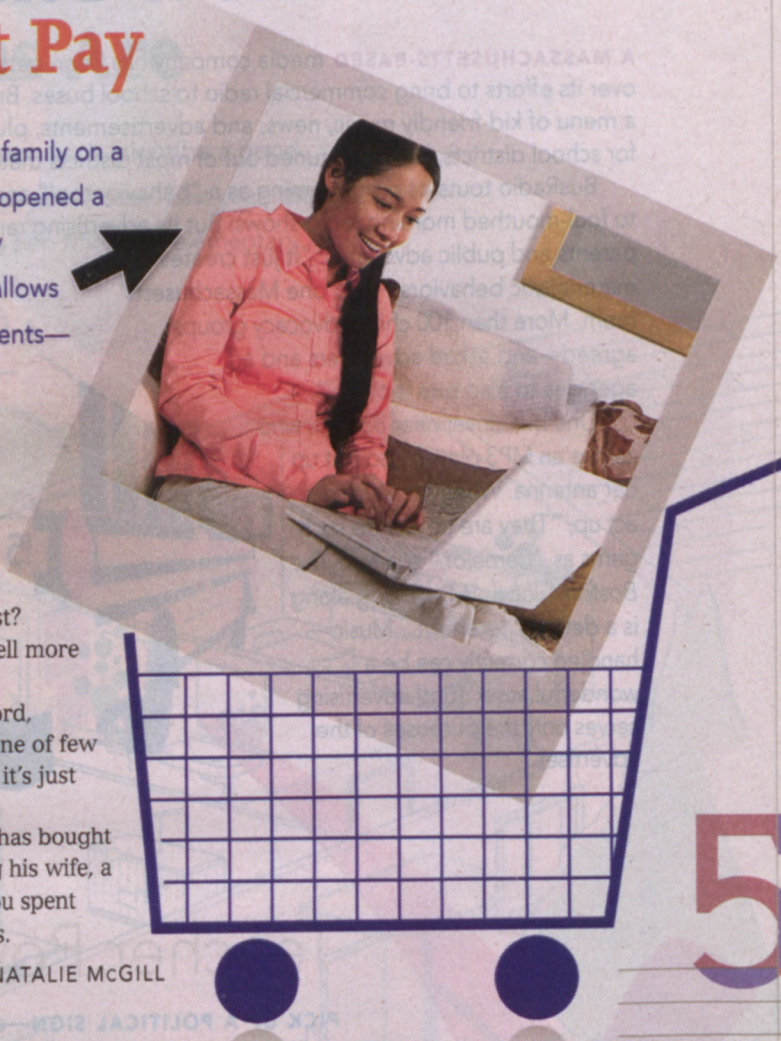
Help for the Helpers!

Although the American School Counselor Association recommends a 250 to 1 ratio between students and counselor, the national average is currently closer to 488 to 1. And, in some places, it's much higher: 966 in California and nearly 800 in Minnesota and Arizona.

This month, as counselors mark National School Counseling Week (February 5–9), these rates show the increasing pressure to serve students with rapidly growing needs. A recent study showed counselors spend more than half their time on burgeoning mental health issues. But many say paperwork—especially test-related—eats up even more time.

Lesson Plans That Pay

When Paul Edelman realized he couldn't support his family on a teacher's salary, the former New York City instructor opened a business that he hopes will help other educators stay afloat. Nearly a year old, TeachersPayTeachers.com allows educators to buy and sell lessons and assessments—a particularly useful service for new teachers.



FIRST 5 YEARS

"THE IDEA EXCITED ME because I was helping teachers make supplemental income," Edelman says. "It seemed like the perfect thing to do."

Prices vary from 50 cents to $30 for materials ranging from worksheets to semester-long plans, and Edelman gets 15 percent of a teacher's sales. The rest? Extra income. So far, 5,000 teachers have registered to sell more than 3,000 products.

Matt Thayer, of Ygnacio Valley High School in Concord, California, has sold 39 lessons on the site. He sees it as one of few reputable online resources. "[Most] stuff on the Internet, it's just crap," Thayer says.

Arizona special education instructor Jeffrey Richards has bought more than 25 lessons and even made referrals—one being his wife, a fifth-grade teacher. "My wife clicks on there and goes, 'You spent over $100 on there?' and I go, 'Really?'" Richards chuckles.

—NATALIE McGILL

SWEET NOTHINGS

'DEAR CANDY, I DON'T THINK WE CAN SEE EACH OTHER ANYMORE...'

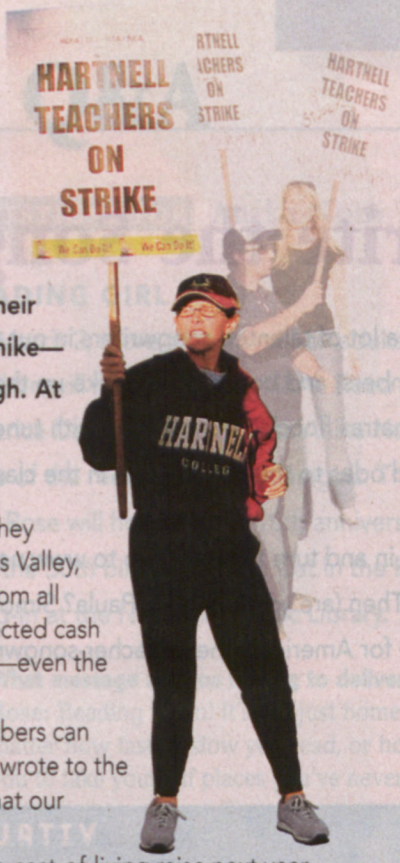
IF YOU'RE A KID, Valentine's Day isn't about cards and carnations. It's about candy!

Still, students will have to settle for sweet nothings at many schools this year, as anti-candy policies take the sugar out of the celebration. In a survey of the country's 100 largest school districts, nearly half have restricted junk food at class parties, according to the School Nutrition Association. (Last year, Texas legislators passed a "cupcake law" to make exceptions for student birthdays.) That means no trick-or-treating on Halloween and no chocolate kisses on Valentine's Day.

But honeyed words are always OK....

PHOTO TOP: JASON HOMA; CANDY HEARTS PHOTO: BRIAN ERICKSON

You'll Never Walk Alone



After three years without a salary raise—even as their college president gave himself an 83 percent pay hike—the Hartnell College Faculty Association had enough. At 5:30 one morning last October, they hit the bricks.

AND THEY WEREN'T ALONE.

When Hartnell faculty marched on the picket line, they walked side-by-side with K–12 teachers from the Salinas Valley, as well as California Teachers Association colleagues from all over the state. From as far as San Diego, teachers collected cash for the strike fund. And other unions lent their support—even the air conditioning repairmen refused to cross their line!

"Your determination...is something all faculty members can understand and respect," NEA President Reg Weaver wrote to the Hartnell College Faculty Association (HCFA). "Know that our hearts are with you in this struggle."

Within days, Hartnell won an 11 percent raise and a cost-of-living raise next year, estimated at 4.2 percent. "There was a lot of solidarity out there, and I think it did make a difference," said HCFA President Christine Svendsen. "A win for one is a win for all, and a loss for one is a tremendous loss for all."

[STATISTIC]

The percentage of **TEACHERS** who say they'll still be **TEACHING** in five years.

SOURCE: METLIFE SURVEY OF THE AMERICAN TEACHER 2006

THE STUDENTS HAVE SPOKEN. And, given the results of NEA's Substitute Educator Day Poll, it seems most of them are young men! Actress Jessica Alba—the star of *Into the Blue* and *Fantastic Four*—is the celebrity that respondents most want to see in the classroom for a day. Alba won 46 percent of the more than 5,000 votes. Runner-up Oprah Winfrey took 24 percent.

The poll was part of NEA's celebration of Substitute Teachers Day, observed during American Education Week in November and designed to highlight the need for greater respect and better wages, benefits, and training for substitute teachers. For more information, go to www.nea.org/aew.

Global Takes

A Language Crisis

Two years ago, the U.K. decided to allow students to drop foreign languages at age 14. Since then, a surprising number of kids have said, "Oui, oui!" to that. Less than 25 percent of students have continued their language study past the minimum age, a new report says, leaving foreign language teachers increasingly frustrated.

Victory in Croatia

After 90 percent of all teachers in Croatia went on strike for three days in November, the Croatian government finally gave them a decent raise—6 percent increases every year for the next three years, and bonuses over the next six years. (Teachers had been earning about $610 a month.) The teachers belong to three unions, affiliated with Education International (EI), of which NEA is a founding member.

Dangerous Work in Iraq

In 2005, 296 educators were murdered in Iraq. In early 2006, another 280 were killed, and up to 100 kidnapped. With that in mind, EI wrote to the Iraqi president late last year, urging him to "guarantee a safe and secure working environment" for teachers. In a country where just 30 percent of students actually go to school, increasing safety would help everybody.

Want to share a story?

> Send it by mail:
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1201 16th St., N.W.,
Washington, DC 20036

> Send it by e-mail:
neatoday@nea.org

JESSICA ALBA PHOTO: RUFUS F. FOLKKS; CHALKBOARD: DIGITAL VISION

You Write the Songs!

WOW! There are a lot of talented songwriters in our classrooms! We asked for songs from NEA members, and boy, did you strike up the band! From all over the country, would-be Sinatras flooded our mailbox with tunes of the teaching life, laments of NCLB, and odes to their colleagues in the classrooms.

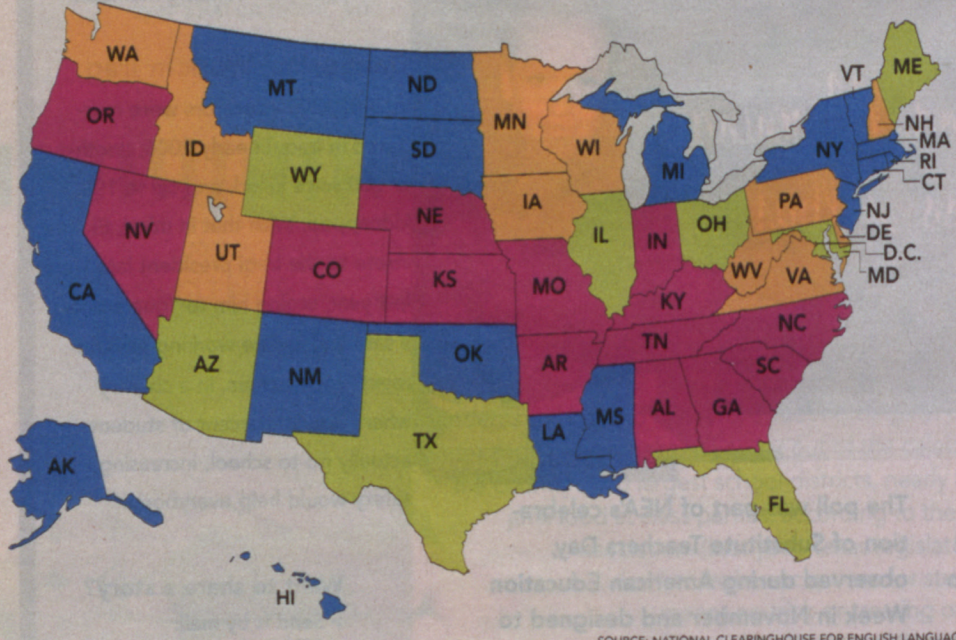
Now it's time to tune in and turn them on. Go to www.neatoday.org and listen to our five favorites. Then (are you listening, Paula? Simon?), you too will have a chance to cast a vote for America's finest teacher-songwriter.

VITAL STATS

ENGLISH-LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Percent increase by state from 1993 to 2003

- Less than 50%
- 50.0% to 99.9%
- 100.0% to 199.9%
- More than 200%



SOURCE: NATIONAL CLEARINGHOUSE FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ACQUISITION & LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

REJECTED!

JUST SAYING NO

THE STATE OF NEW JERSEY recently turned down about $800,000 in federal money for abstinence-only programs, saying the rules were too restrictive. Telling kids that abstinence is the only sure way to avoid pregnancy and diseases? No problem, says the Garden State. But forbidding teachers from talking about contraception? Or declaring marital sex the "expected standard of human sexual activity"? Fuggedaboudit! With that, New Jersey becomes the fourth state to reject the federal abstinence money, following California, Pennsylvania, and Maine.

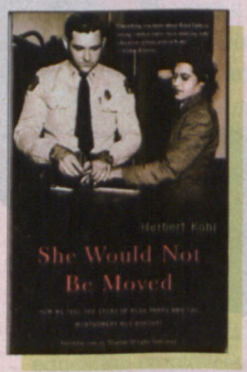
"In essence, you blog.

FIGURE ON TROPHY: MODIFIED FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY JOSE LUIS PELAEZ, INC.; THUMBS DOWN PHOTO: LORELYN MEDINA

BOOK FOCUS

Rosa Parks, Revisited

You've heard the story about Rosa Parks, of course. She was too tired to stand up one day in 1955, and her refusal to move to the back of the bus sparked the Montgomery bus boycott and Civil Rights Movement in America. But here's the truth, as Herbert Kohl asserts in *She Would Not Be Moved: How We Tell the Story of Rosa Parks and the Montgomery Bus Boycott* (The New Press): Rosa Parks wasn't just a tired old woman, acting spontaneously, on her own. As Kohl details with gripping evidence, Parks actually was part of a community of organized and risk-taking activists. And that's an important lesson for teachers and students to learn, says Marian Wright Edelman, president of the Children's Defense Fund, in the book's introduction. "Courageous leaders like Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King Jr. didn't suddenly appear out of nowhere, and they weren't superhuman with magical powers," she writes. "Teaching children this lesson reinforces the idea that they can make a difference too." The book also aims to help teachers with a list of classroom resources and a guide to evaluating textbooks that discuss this period in American history.



4

[STATISTIC]

The percentage of **TEACHERS** who feel **UNSAFE** at school.

SOURCE: METLIFE SURVEY OF THE AMERICAN TEACHER 2006

Q&A

QUESTIONS FOR **Anika Noni Rose**

READING GIRL

On March 2, more than 45 million adults and children will help celebrate NEA's Read Across America Day, including actress Anika Noni Rose of the recent movie *Dreamgirls*. That day, Rose will honor RAA's 10th anniversary and the 50th birthday of the Cat in the Hat at a celebrity Red Carpet Read-In at the New York Public Library.

What message are you hoping to deliver to kids?

Rose: Reading is fun! It's not just homework but also home-fun. It doesn't matter how fast or slow you read, or how big or small the book is. It allows you to take yourself places you've never been or even dreamed of.

Can you tell us about your own favorite children's books?

Rose: I love Ezra Jack Keats' *The Snowy Day*, Michael Brown's *Santa Mouse*, and Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are*.

Who helped you develop a love of reading?

Rose: I was a very early reader and unfortunately, kids sometimes don't take kindly to what they perceive as overachieving. Mrs. Lucy Nevers was my second-grade teacher, and she made certain that every child in her class felt good about their work. That's important, because I think peer pressure can turn children's pride into a stigma. Like Mrs. Nevers, we need to reward the desire to learn and teach children to support each other—it's important they know it's OK to learn.

But my father is probably most responsible for my love of reading. The first stories I remember him reading with me are *Romeo and Juliet* and Aesop's *Fables*. I actually had a fish that I named Othello. We would read together every night. Then, when I got older, I'd say good night and then whip out my flashlight and read under the covers.

Who was your favorite teacher?

Rose: My favorite teacher is my grandmother. She didn't teach me in a classroom, but she did teach special education in Hartford Public Schools. She was, and is, amazing. To this day, we will run into former students of hers and they'll talk about how she changed their lives and made them feel like they could "do."

For more information about NEA's Read Across America, including book lists and other resources for educators, go to **www.nea.org/readacross**.

". . . at your own risk."

—A new **Indiana school district policy** that allows administrators to punish students for comments made online, reported in *USA Today*, October 26, 2006.

ROSE PHOTO: TM&© 2006 DREAMWORKS, LLC

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Speak Up!

As critics continue to attack public education and a new election cycle begins, educators need to make their voices heard.

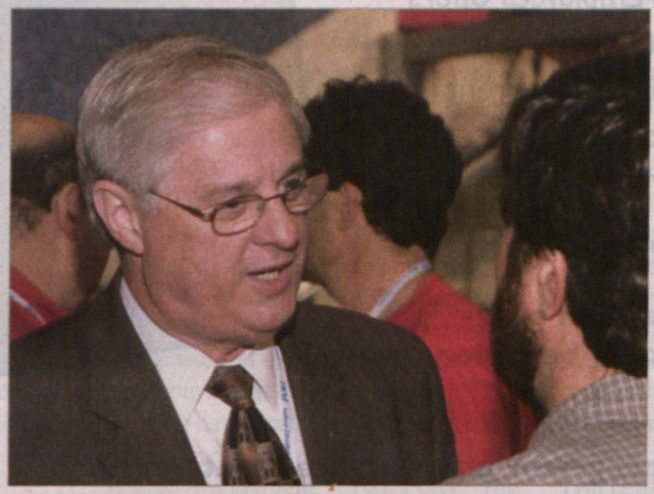
NEA Vice President Dennis Van Roekel has been traveling the country, encouraging NEA members to be politically active and make their voices heard. All that, *after* the fall elections that helped elect a wave of pro-public education lawmakers.

"It felt good to see people—whether Democrats or Republicans—work hard and get results," Van Roekel says. "But our work is just beginning."

"We have begun the process of working toward a change in course," he adds. "The task now is to make sure that this shift results in resources for students and respect for education employees."

There's often a disconnect between the partisan nature of politics and the tools and resources educators seek for their own classrooms. But with the No Child Left Behind law (NCLB) up for reauthorization later in the year (see page 30) and the 2008 presidential campaign poised to jump to the front burner, it's critical that educators break past that "disconnect," Van Roekel says.

"We don't need to be apologetic," he says. "Civics is part of what we teach, and we believe participation is essential in a democracy."



NEA Vice President **Dennis Van Roekel** encourages members to make their voices heard. "The buck does not stop at the door of a legislator with a ballpoint pen," he says.

> **"EVERY SINGLE DECISION** that impacts our schools and us is made by elected politicians....We need to be out there in every district, making our voices heard."
> —NEA VICE PRESIDENT DENNIS VAN ROEKEL

All educators need to see "the connection between public policy and public policymakers," says Van Roekel. "The reality is that every single decision that impacts our schools and us is made by elected politicians. But the buck does not stop at the door of a legislator with a ballpoint pen. We need to be out there in every district, making our voices heard."

And there, educators play a crucial role. They make up the 10 percent of society called "influentials"—the people who "tell their neighbors what to buy [and] which politicians to support," according to the Institute for Politics, Democracy, and the Internet. Along with teachers, influentials include education support professionals, who tend to be connected to their communities and whose opinions are valued by their friends and neighbors.

Educators' voices also provide an emotional connection. For instance, their stories about witnessing the effects of NCLB firsthand have already been introduced into congressional testimony and will be a key part of NEA's ongoing efforts to have the law changed. And the Internet provides new ways to do just that—whether through sharing a personal story on nea.org (www.nea.org/ref?2323) or e-mailing your member of Congress via NEA's Legislative Action Center (www.nea.org/lac).

While "the unorganized can't play," as David Stockman, the Reagan-era budget guru, once famously said, "we need to be organized," Van Roekel says. "We need to play."

But making your voice heard goes beyond politics. It's part of the everyday discussions educators have with parents, friends, community members, and each other—and it should come from the heart. Looking back to his nearly three decades in the classroom, Van Roekel often asks educators two things: Why did you enter education, and why are you still there? "The answers are where you get your energy and passion," he says.

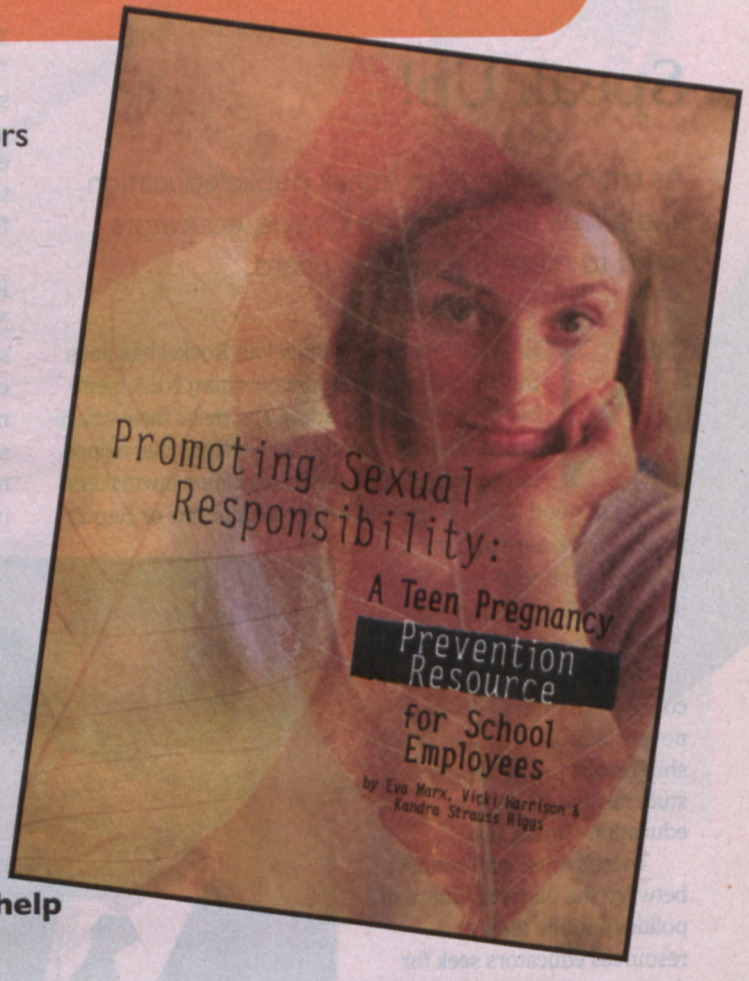
NEA's mission, vision, and core values, approved by members during the 2006 Representative Assembly, put words to that passion. The vision—a great public school for every student—and the core values—equal opportunity, a just society, democracy, professionalism, partnership, and collective action—are what drive the Association's mission: To advocate for education professionals and to unite NEA members and the nation to fulfill the promise of public education to prepare every student to succeed in a diverse and interdependent world. But they do far more than that, Van Roekel argues.

"They explain why all of us work so hard in the first place," he says. "They remind me of why I stayed in teaching for all these years."

Voicing these basic beliefs can help turn away both criticism and cynicism. "In their day-to-day world, educators get so many negative messages," Van Roekel says. "This changes the conversation. The more we talk about our values and vision, the more we make them real."

PHOTO: NICK CRETTIER/NEA

Don't miss your opportunity.


Promoting Sexual Responsibility:
A Teen Pregnancy Prevention Resource for School Employees
by Eva Marx, Vicki Harrison & Kendra Strauss Riggs

Opportunities arise every day for educators to help students avoid risky behaviors that can result in unwanted consequences—like teen pregnancy. Despite a recent decline, the United States still leads the western industrialized world in teen pregnancy and unplanned births.

Promoting Sexual Responsibility: A Teen Pregnancy Prevention Resource for School Employees offers strategies that educators can use to help students act responsibly. Drawing on current research and practice, this book answers some difficult questions, such as:

- ✓ **How pervasive is teen pregnancy?**
- ✓ **What can I do to reduce teen pregnancy, promote responsible behavior, and help students succeed?**
- ✓ **Are there examples of programs and activities that work?**
- ✓ **When should schools start to address this problem?**
- ✓ **How can we build a community coalition?**
- ✓ **How do we organize a program at my school?**

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No End to Litigation

WASHINGTON The Mt. Adams School District continues to defend its decision to fire two teachers without termination hearings in 2002. Gary Giedra and Caryl Spencer were fired because their state certificates had expired—even though Spencer's renewal application was mishandled by the district's interoffice mail service, and Giedra had renewed his certificate within 11 days of its lapse. When the two lost their jobs without due process, the legal team at the **Washington Education Association (WEA)** stepped in.

In 2005, after years of litigation, the Washington Court of Appeals upheld a lower court ruling that the two had the right to termination hearings and awarded Giedra and Spencer about $215,000 in back pay and attorney fees. But last year, school district officials disputed the ruling. (One of the teachers has since stopped teaching, and the other moved to another district.) "Most school districts work with teachers in that situation," says WEA field representative Mike Horner. "They put in a substitute while the teacher gets the certificate renewed." The district could spend around $300,000 trying the case.

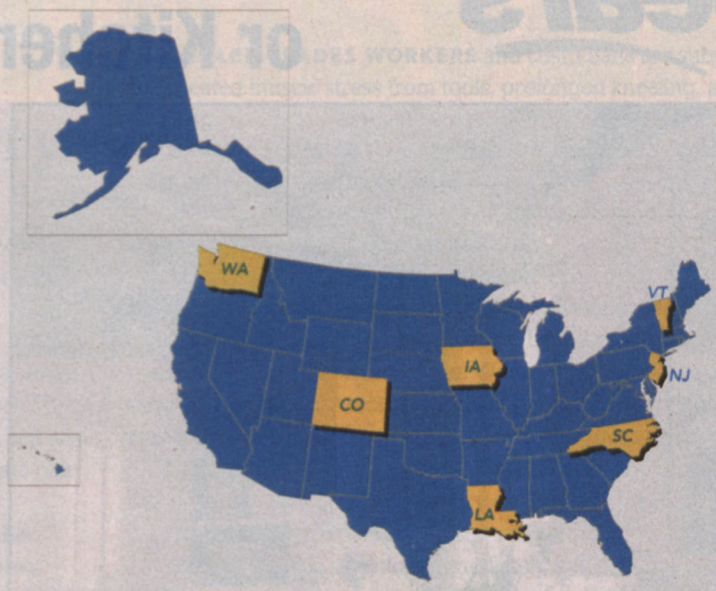
A No-Relief Tax Cut

SOUTH CAROLINA The legislature recently voted to eliminate the portion of taxes levied on owner-occupied homes that is earmarked for schools. The idea is to offset the loss of local revenue for public schools with a one-cent increase in the state sales tax—generating $585 million. But officials with the **South Carolina Education Association (SCEA)** don't believe the tax increase will replace lost property taxes. Replacing local taxes with state taxes also shifts control from local communities to state lawmakers, says SCEA President Sheila Gallagher. "This legislation is about political relief, not property tax relief," she adds.

More Time To Teach

COLORADO "Regaining time to teach" was the theme of a recent organizing campaign in Denver that attracted 102 new members in just two weeks. The target of opportunity campaign, sponsored by the **Denver Classroom Teachers Association (DCTA)**, focused on the return of discretionary time to teachers, smaller class sizes, teacher-led professional development, and a reduction in paperwork, such as elementary report cards that are 14 pages long. "The capacity-building gained from the campaign was phenomenal," says DCTA President Kim Ursetta. About 3,200 educators were contacted, and some provided written testimony about the time squeeze.

"We have a ton of anecdotes to use in our newspaper, our lobbying efforts—everywhere," Ursetta says. "The stories show a profession stretched to the max."



Raising Rank

IOWA Iowa's teacher salary ranking, now 41st in the nation, will undoubtedly improve after a dramatic pay hike totaling more than $200 million over three years. The state earmarked pay hikes totaling $35 million this school year, $70 million for the next, and $105 million in 2008–09. "This agreement is a great down payment toward ensuring that Iowa can continue to attract and keep top-quality teachers," says Linda Nelson, president of the **Iowa State Education Association (ISEA)**. "As other states continue to move ahead, we have to keep up." The landmark legislation marks the culmination of a multi-year ISEA effort to generate public support for increasing school funding from preK classes to community colleges.

ESP Academy

NEW JERSEY **The New Jersey Education Association (NJEA)** is offering education support professionals (ESPs) the chance to get back in the classroom. NJEA recently launched its ESP Career Academy to better serve the 50,000 ESPs among its 196,000 members. The academy provides education opportunities through online programs, workshops, seminars, and a partnership with several community colleges that can help members earn a two-year degree.

Thirteen Paras Win Three

VERMONT Thirteen paraprofessionals represented by the **Ludlow Education Association (LEA)** reached a three-year settlement that provides base wage increases to $10.37 per hour this year, $11.23 in 2007–08, and $12.06 in 2008–09. In addition, negotiators cut the number of steps in the salary schedule and added a new column for paras who are "highly qualified" or hold a degree. Bereavement leave, an increase in tuition reimbursement, and complaint language were also added to the contract.

Teacher Pay Boost

LOUISIANA Gov. Kathleen Blanco hopes to reach the regional average in teacher pay by boosting salaries in early 2007 by about $2,100. The average state salary for teachers is $42,100, below the regional average of $44,219. The **Louisiana Association of Educators (LAE)** is asking for a $3,000 pay hike.

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The Road to Recovery

For some school employees, getting hurt on the job is just the beginning of the bad news.

It was on a bitterly cold and icy morning that Lisa Jones took a wrong step while shoveling snow at school. The custodian ended up with not only a slipped disk, but also a four-year legal battle that made her physical pain pale in comparison.

Her troubles involved a doctor's misdiagnosis, another physician's miscommunication, and an insurance company hired by the school district that didn't want to honor its workers' compensation agreement.

Jones, of the Triad School District in Troy, Illinois, fell in December 2000. The first doctor she visited mistook her muscle spasms and headaches as flu symptoms. When her fingers started to go numb, she finally received X-rays 10 days later, and workers' comp took effect.

When Jones traveled out of town the following February, she wheeled her luggage to the airport. Her doctor noted this activity in a subsequent report to the insurance company.

"They saw that note and stopped payments [for medical treatments, time off, and medicine]," says Jones, a member of the Triad Custodial and Maintenance Association. "They said my suffering was due to carrying luggage."

With her doctor's support, Jones tried to appeal, but was assigned to a different claims adjuster every time she called. "I had six or seven adjusters who would work up a deal and then not honor it," she says. After four years of litigation, Jones settled with the insurer for less than $15,000.

Although the Occupational Safety and Health Act guarantees the right to a workplace free from recognized hazards, on-the-job injuries and illnesses are more common for education support professionals (ESPs) than any other group of school employees. Workers in every ESP job category are particularly vulnerable to developing repetitive stress injuries. For example:

BUS DRIVERS repeatedly open and close manually operated doors, and depress the clutch and brake pedals.

FOOD SERVICE WORKERS repeatedly lift heavy equipment, stand for long shifts, and reach above shoulder level and below knee level or across counters.

TECHNICAL SERVICE AND CLERICAL WORKERS perform repetitive keystroke motions on computers.

SKILLED TRADES WORKERS and custodians are subject to repeated muscle stress from tools, prolonged kneeling, and bending.

HEALTH WORKERS are exposed to diseases and contact with blood and other body fluids.

SECURITY STAFF face psychological stress from dealing with violent student and parent behavior.

Being familiar with injury prevention techniques, liability laws, and insurance coverage is as important as knowing how to do your job, says Marcus Albrecht, a UniServ director with the Illinois Education Association. Workers' comp "is one of the most complicated areas that members have," he says. "Nobody knows how it works. It can be interpreted in different ways."

NEA has developed a checklist for school employees to follow should they develop an injury or illness on the job.

INFORM your supervisor as soon as possible.

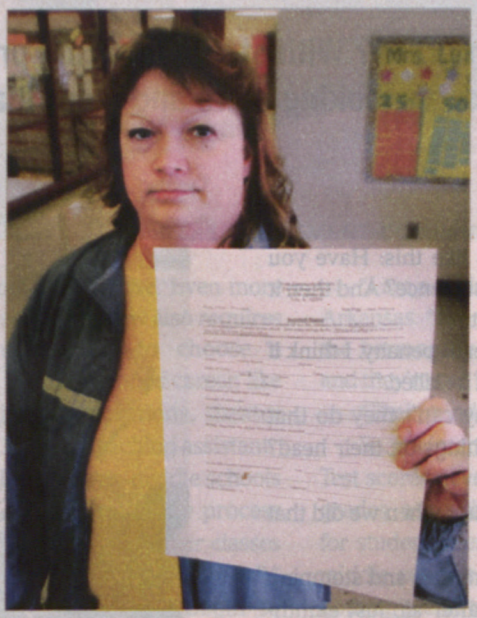
GET MEDICAL attention immediately and document it.

INFORM your employer in writing about the injury or illness. Each state has its own deadline for giving notice.

FILE A CLAIM with the state compensation agency.

ASK THE AGENCY for a hearing if the employer—or its insurance company—refuses or fails to pay workers' compensation that the state agency has determined you are owed.

In most states, workers' compensation laws require employers to carry insurance that pays full medical costs and some proportion of lost wages (usually two-thirds of regular pay) for workers with job-related injuries or illnesses. Workers' comp usually also requires rehabilitation services for disabled workers and death benefits for fatal injuries. It is a "no-fault" system, meaning that employers cannot deny benefits by claiming that the injury was caused by the worker.



"Document everything," says custodian **Lisa Jones** of filing a workers' comp claim.

During her four years of battling the district's insurer, Jones missed work and overtime pay she depended on for household bills. "If it hadn't been for my husband and his job, I don't know what would have happened to me," she says, stressing the importance of leaving a paper trail.

"Document everything," she says. "Get signatures from everyone, and try to get the same caseworker."

—JOHN ROSALES

More ESP stories in this issue:

> Ad-filled radio on school buses causes static – *Page 13*

> 13 lucky paras win a better contract in Vermont – *Page 21*

> ESP Career Academy launches in New Jersey – *Page 21*

PHOTO: MARCI WINTERS-McLAUGHLIN

Advancing THE Middle Ground

Is eighth grade the new 10th grade? With students facing pre-AP classes and choosing majors, it's looking more and more that way.

BY MARY ELLEN FLANNERY

THE CONVERSATION starts like this: Have you heard about Saddam's death sentence? And then it takes off like a dog track rabbit.

"Personally, I'm for the death penalty. I think if you kill somebody, you should be killed."

"Yeah, but hanging? Why can't they do that thing where they put those things on their head? And then they power it?"

"You mean, electrocution? Well, because when we did that in Florida, people were catching on fire!"

"Ooooh!" they cry, shaking their prom hair and stomping their Vans on the tiled floor. They are, after all, just eighth-graders and the thought of heads on fire is simply too thrilling. They deconstruct. They giggle. One of them, Lianna Llewellyn, simply puts her head on her desk and silently laughs.

This particular class at the Bak Middle School of the Arts in West Palm Beach, Florida, is a history class where dates don't seem to matter much. "When I see you again, we're going to talk about what we should do in the face of a witch hunt," says Jay Lowe, a National Board Certified Teacher. "Should you sit there with your finger up your nose?"

Is this the typical middle school American history class? Nope. But it wouldn't be atypical in a high school, especially an Advanced Placement class, where higher-level thinking trumps memorization. And that's exactly what Lowe and his colleagues had in mind when they put it together this year. This is "pre-AP" history, which sets up for ninth-grade AP geography (which, in turn, sets up for three more years of AP history and a great-looking college application.) And, while it might not be typical eighth-grade fare now, don't be surprised to see it on the menu at your middle school soon.

Lianna Llewellyn, a Florida eighth-grader, spends her school day thinking like a high school student, including this hour spent with teacher Jay Lowe.

With middle school test scores sagging, colleges complaining about remediation rates, parents praying for the Ivy League, and state and national policymakers worried about job readiness and global competitiveness, academic rigor is in. Eighth grade has become the new 10th grade.

In fact, by eighth grade, ongoing education research shows students already are accelerating on the road to college—or completely derailed, says Cynthia Schmeiser, president of well-known assessment company ACT's education division. Even scarier? "It may be that eighth grade is too late," she adds.

With that in mind, lawmakers across the country are moving to make sure that their eighth-graders are well on the road to college. In one of his final acts, former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush signed a new law requiring middle school to offer at least one high

"If they weren't COLLEGE-READY by eighth grade, they didn't make it, ...There was nothing they could do. THAT'S SCARY. REALLY SCARY." ACT'S SCHMEISER SAYS OF THE ASSESSMENT COMPANY'S RESEARCH.

school level course. Even more novel, the new law also requires eighth-graders to choose a "major," or intended career, like landscape operations, theater arts, or even teaching assistant.

In Arkansas, middle schools are going through the process of classifying all of their classes as either "regular" or "pre-AP," while high schools begin to offer only "pre-AP" and "AP." And nearby in Oklahoma, teachers are busily applying themselves to state grants for free training in pre-AP preparation.

So when Lianna Llewellyn stops laughing and picks her head up off her desk, she'll go on to fill it with algebra, second-year Spanish, language arts (they're reading the Old English poem *Beowulf*), and chamber music for string quartets. All are high school classes.

Later, a friend will complain to her, "Mr. Lowe was making fun of me! I said these were all big words and he was like, 'Welcome to fourth grade.'"

Eighth grade is much harder.

FOR DECADES, educators have wondered what to do with kids like Lianna. Just a few years ago, they were writing letters to Santa Claus; in a few more years, they'll be writing to college admissions officers. For now, they're stuck in the middle. Ask a middle school teacher why she loves her job and she might tell you, I have completely different students every day. Every hour. Every minute! They change before her eyes.

"I am a middle school teacher by choice," says Kathy Heller of Arkansas. "I've taught college. I've taught the younger ones. I like the hormonally challenged....They're not cynical high-schoolers, and they're not 'I want to hang onto you and wipe my nose.'

"Their minds are just full and inquisitive."

So, it's interesting. But, for decades, it's been challenging, too. Test scores never have been particularly high in early-adolescent grades, as teachers compete with so many personal distractions for student attention. For decades, in the name of improvement, middle schools have experienced near constant "reform"—but nothing seems to have worked as expected.

In 1989, the Carnegie Foundation issued *Turning Points*, its acclaimed report calling for smaller, more cohesive learning communities, cooperative learning between kids of varying abilities, more teacher education geared specifically to pre-adolescents, better connections between communities and schools, and more. It called for replacing the traditional "junior high" concept with the "middle school" philosophy and its recognition that, developmentally and emotionally, these kids aren't just smaller high school students. With that, many campuses switched mostly to grades 6 through 8 and embraced team approaches to teaching.

At that time, eighth-graders scored an average 257 points (out of 500) in reading on the National Assessment of Educational Progress. Ten years later, after widespread change based on Carnegie's recommendations, they scored all of two points higher.

And while test scores aren't everything, they are often the impetus for reform. It's not surprising then, with scores remaining virtually unmoved, that in 2005 the conservative Fordham Institute released its own hot-tempered call for change, *Mayhem in the Middle*, driven by No Child Left Behind-style standards and written

PHOTOS: SCOTT SUCHMAN

by Florida's new Chancellor of K–12 Education, Cheri Pierson Yecke. Among other changes, it demands a return to old-fashioned K–8. More discipline. Less coddling!

It concludes, not surprisingly: "It is time for a thorough reform of middle grade education, including a new focus on high standards, discipline, and accountability for student achievement."

And so, the pendulum swings.

BUT HERE'S ONE thing that stays the same. Eighth-graders... they are not like us.

Overheard at lunch:

"People scare me."

"So, like why are you around us?"

"Because you're not PEOPLE!"

After waiting years and years for proper documents, Lianna Llewellyn and her family moved to South Florida from Jamaica three years ago, when Lianna was 9. "There are so many resources here that people take for granted," she says. "In Jamaica, we would be happy to have textbooks."

She's a serious student, a first violinist in the school orchestra, and the kind of girl who prefers physics to Phat. Here's what she likes: Fantasy novels, like Christopher Paolini's *Eragon* series—"Because, in a fantasy book, anything could happen. Regular fiction is too predictable." Here's what she doesn't like: Negative political advertising—"They don't actually say what they stand for."

Her friends play the cello and viola. One just earned a detention—her third in just three months—for "excessive laughing" during class. (What happens during detention? Lianna wouldn't know. "I've never had one," she says flatly.) Another classmate offers this bit of wisdom during history: "Technically, the whole idea of communism isn't bad... it's that they never realized their ideals."

Overheard at lunch:

"Did you know 'gullible' isn't in the dictionary?"

"What? Oh. Ha-ha."

Basically, we're talking about good kids, right? Great kids, actually, at a supportive middle school—the kind that embraced all of the touchy-feely community talk years back, but still manages to stay at the very top of Florida's academic measurements. (Although students don't need to meet any academic benchmarks to attend Bak Middle, they do participate in art auditions, a process that probably weeds out the recalcitrant.) As their work becomes more demanding, though, students say it does wear on them.

To manage her increasing workload, Lianna lugs a nylon backpack that threatens to pull her down the up staircase. It weighs more than the average prekindergartner and holds five workbooks, a music folder stuffed with notes from Bach's Brandenburg concertos, and a 3-inch-thick three-ring binder that eats paper. "I'm going to see a doctor this week," she says indignantly. "For my back!"

Also indispensable: A business-style day planner filled with notes on science fair deadlines, homework assignments, and concert dates.

"I can't live without my planner. I lost it for like a day and...it wasn't good," she says.

She runs from class to class, upstairs and down, with one brief bathroom break a day. Rather than waste time on cafeteria lines,

she makes her own ham and cheese on white, grabs a healthy granola bar from her kitchen cabinet, and sits outside in the Florida-style courtyard.

Overheard at lunch:

"OK, why is my cheese like that? Why does it have shoe marks in it? Hey! Who stepped on my cheese?!"

Lianna's older sister is a high school senior applying to the best of the best: Harvard and Stanford. "Yeah, they are good, but I don't like Harvard. It's so gray and dull," Lianna says.

Her plans would take her to a college in a more rural setting and then medical school. "I'd like to be a doctor," she says. And then, as a friend approaches, she adds, "Doctors are cool, right?" "Yeah," her friend answers. "I'd say they're a... what's the word? A necessity of life!"

LIANNA IS LUCKY. She's on track to wear that white doctor's coat. But many eighth-graders are not, according to education research. And, chances are, they'll never be able to climb back up.

"If they weren't college-ready by eighth grade, they didn't make it," ACT's Schmeiser says of the assessment company's research. "There was nothing they could do. That's scary. Really scary."

To be considered "college-ready" by ACT, eighth-graders need to meet specific benchmarks in reading, math, English, and science, and ACT sets those marks based on the success rates and histories of current college students. A scant 13 percent of last year's eighth-graders made the grade in all four subjects. Just 37 percent hit the target in math, and 43 percent in reading. "This suggests earlier is better—earlier intervention, earlier identification," Schmeiser warns.

In the contemporary world of competitive preschool and increasingly selective college admissions, nobody wants their child to be too late for anything. In 2005, when some southern Illinois parents learned—at a spaghetti dinner, no less—that students at other area middle schools were taking algebra in eighth grade, they pressed for the same opportunity.

"We were [all], 'Oh my goodness,'" one parent told the *Peoria Journal Star*. "This is about being behind. And, frankly, that [is] not in our plan."

That's not in the plan of state and national policymakers either. When President Bush called for more Advanced Placement classes and more rigorous math and science in last year's State of the Union Address, he was talking about a competitive curriculum that starts in middle school.

At least one state governor already has responded—his little brother, the former Florida governor. His final laws requiring more rigorous middle school math and majors are intended to make school more relevant. But many teachers argue it forces students to make ridiculously early commitments to a specific academic or vocational direction. Most preteens haven't been exposed to enough career choices to make that kind of decision, explains Tampa teacher Evelyn Butts.

While Florida may be taking the lead, governors all over the country are jumping aboard the rigors bandwagon—often led by their own non-profit organization, Achieve Inc., a partnership between governors and business leaders that's also called for rising academic standards. By eighth grade, according to their benchmarks, students should be able to try this on for size: What is the set of points (x,y) that satisfies both $5x - y \geq 3$ and $2x - 4y < 1$? (For the answer, see page 29.)

In Arkansas, where pre-AP classes are proliferating, Heller, a pre-AP algebra and geometry teacher at Lakewood Middle School in North Little Rock, is now training colleagues all over the country on pre-AP strategies. (A taste of her wisdom: "Pre-AP is not more of something; it's making it deeper and richer.")

As an incentive to increase rigor, Arkansas provides $650 state grants to teachers for pre-AP or AP training from the College Board or Board-trained teachers. The College Board's "Pre-AP Initiative" is all about training teachers for active, high-level learning, but the Board itself frowns upon schools labeling classes as "pre-AP," says spokeswoman Jennifer Topiel. The Board fears that students without "pre-AP" under their belt may become discouraged from taking AP courses in high school, she says.

In Oklahoma, as part of its 2006 "equity plan," the state also is providing free pre-AP training to teachers, particularly in high-poverty, low-performing schools. And these kinds of efforts are working, Heller says—more kids are taking those classes and doing well on them. (Better than well, actually. At Lakewood Middle, 98 percent of students passed the state's end-of-year algebra exam.)

But is it reasonable to expect (as do many policymakers) that all eighth-graders should take algebra or pre-AP classes? Maybe someday, teachers say. After we cure drug addiction, provide affordable housing to all families, and eradicate poverty. But, in the meantime, perhaps the pendulum is swinging too far.

Consider Lianna's mother, Sonia Llewellyn, an attorney turned reading teacher at another South Florida middle school. It's only about 12 miles from Lianna's school and its high-powered students, but worlds away by other measurements.

Sonia's students are 10 times more likely not to speak English, four times more likely to fail the state's reading test, and four times more likely to live in poverty. While less than 1 percent of

Lianna's classmates will miss three weeks of school this year, according to the Florida Department of Education, nearly a quarter of her mother's students will disappear for at least that long.

But Heller maintains that pre-AP can work at any middle school, and it especially benefits the kids who might otherwise be counted out. (At her school, about a third of the students take free or reduced-price lunch, and nearly 40 percent are Black.) The key, Heller says, is this: Teachers must be appropriately trained, and they really need to want to do it. "It takes a lot of time for me to write tests and to grade them—because it's not just 'Add these two numbers.' It's 'Here's the situation and how are you going to handle it? Draw a picture, show me how you came to this conclusion, defend your answer.'"

At her school, every teacher, regardless of whether they teach pre-AP classes, has been trained in the new strategies. "I'd love to see it work like this everywhere, especially in places where you have minority kids falling through the cracks.

"A pre-AP friend of mine from Oklahoma says it's like putting a chicken in the oven. Everybody wants to try it, and you can't say no, it's just for you or you."

"TODAY WE'RE GOING to be relating graphs to real-world events," announces Lianna's algebra teacher, Anthony Napoleon, another National Board Certified Teacher. His students take out their notebooks, slide open their calculators, and wait for the buzz of the overhead projector.

Here it is: A graph that shows the average person's height. Why doesn't it start at the very bottom of the Y axis? "Babies aren't zero inches!" a student calls out. And what about this flat part, stretching across the top? Yep, the grown-up years.

"If this graph were to continue through adulthood, it would probably go down again—around your 60s—when you start to shrink," Napoleon offers.

Quiet snorts. People shrink?

Algebra is the hallmark of a pre-college eighth-grade curriculum. Take it now, and you'll likely be shaking the college president's hand in eight more years. But it also illustrates the perils of the new eighth grade. It's hard! In districts where all eighth-graders were once required to take it, failure rates skyrocketed.

"Piaget would roll over in his grave," one teacher mutters about the increasing number of eighth-graders forced into her algebra classes. The French psychologist, famous for his theories on the stages of cognitive development, believed children begin to think abstractly (a must-have skill for algebra) sometime between 12 and adulthood. By eighth grade, some are there. Some aren't.

This is what math teachers are talking about when they say "it finally clicked" for a student. "A light goes off," says Tony Bucco, a Northern Virginia middle school math teacher with 20 years of experience. "It happens at different points, and it's probably tied to a student's cognitive development."

In Palm Beach County, where Lianna goes to school, administrators experimented in 2004 with requiring all eighth-graders to take algebra—over the recommendations of math teachers still waiting for universal "clicking." It was an experiment that too many failed, either because they weren't developmentally ready or appropriately prepared. (Now about half take algebra.) Napoleon recalls teaching a "support class" for the lowest performers that year. "I had kids who didn't understand that there are four 5s in 20. So how do we expect them to get $4x = 20$?"

Today, Lianna has no problem with much more complicated equations. "Let's look at some homework problems," Napoleon says. "Yes, Tyler?"

"Why is there no solution to No. 12?" (It reads: $-3.2 = |8p|$.)

"Good question: Why is there no solution?"

"Absolute value can never be negative," Lianna says, quickly raising her hand.

"That's right."

When done sensibly (i.e., not forcing every preteen John and Jane into quadratic equations, regardless of previous preparation), increased enrollment in middle-school algebra can work well. A decade ago, Virginia's Bucco counted 12 eighth-grade math classes at his middle school, including about five in algebra. Now, nine algebra classes serve about half of all eighth-graders, screened by pretests. And still, his passing rate on Virginia's end-of-year algebra test was 100 percent last year.

In nearby suburban Maryland, it's not just algebra growing at an exponential rate, but geometry. In 2004, the number of Maryland middle school students who passed the state's geometry exam was 4,246, almost double the 2,246 in 2003. (And that means they took algebra in seventh grade.)

On the whole, the increased participation by middle-school students in test-your-brain math is a good thing, Bucco says, especially when they're appropriately prepared. Why, he asks, shouldn't kids be given more opportunities to succeed?

BUT AT THIS AGE, success means many different things.

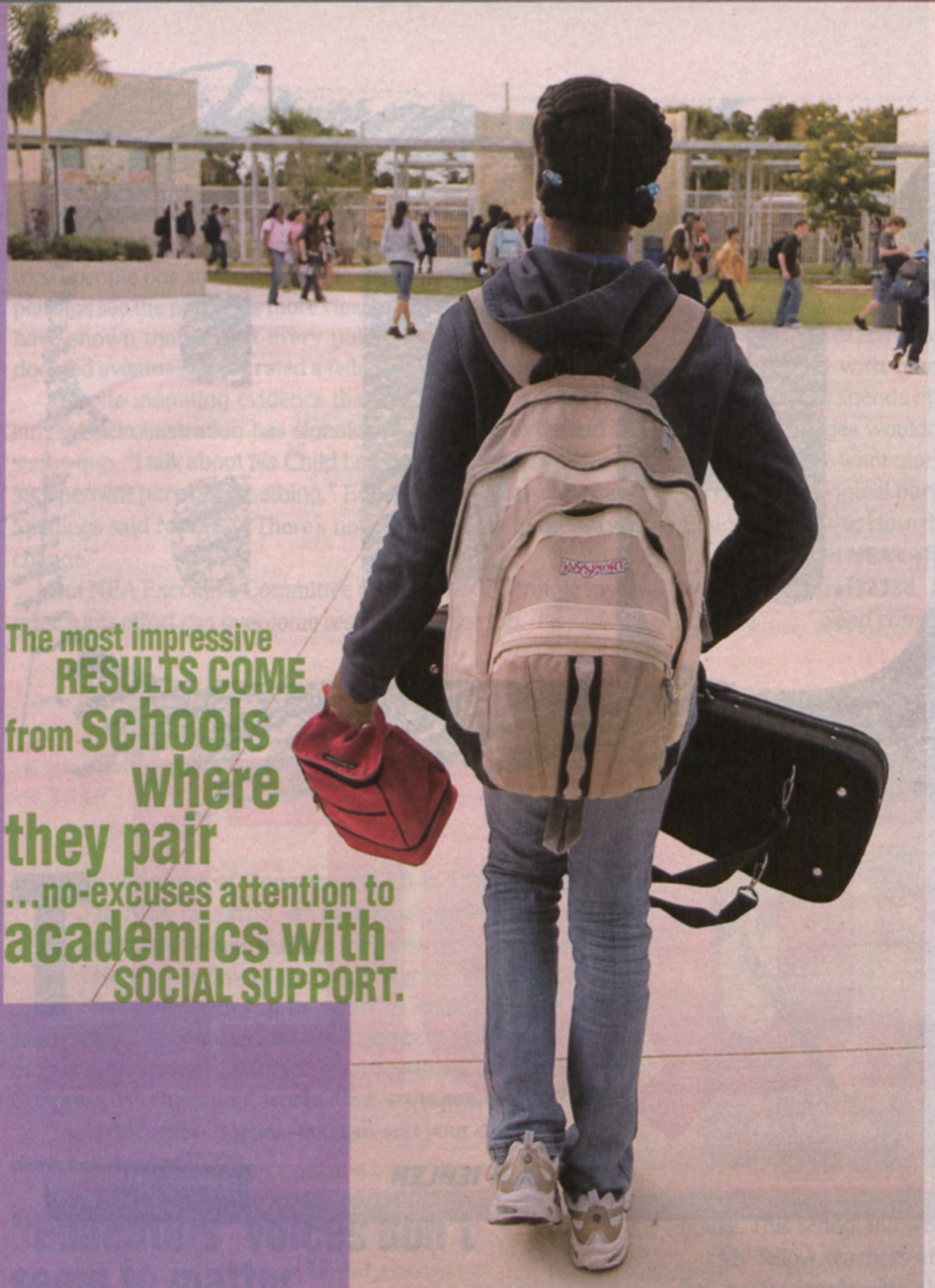
Overheard in the hallway:

"I'm taking a break from dating?"

"Guys or girls?"

"Both!"

Quick quiz: What percentage of middle-schoolers has had sex?



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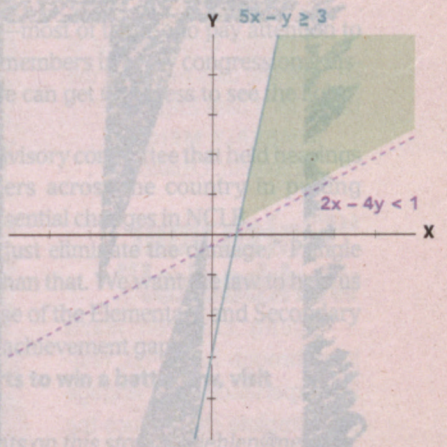


DID YOU GET IT? The points (x,y) satisfying both equations fall in the green shaded area.

Answer: About 20 percent. (And a third had lain on a bed or couch with somebody "they liked" in the previous three months, according to a National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy report.)

Other complex issues threaten. Adolescent depression rates are soaring dangerously. According to the National Mental Health Association, up to one in five teens may suffer from clinical depression, and their rate of suicide has nearly tripled since 1960. (It's now the sixth leading cause of death for 5- to 14-year-olds.) And anorexia—the life-threatening eating disorder—is the third most common illness for preteen and teenage girls.

Overheard during Spanish class:

"Did you see J. Lo in that movie?" "Yeah."

"Wasn't she skinny?" "Yeah."

"My brother saw it and he said she was so fat, and I was like, 'What are you talking about?'"

And, of course, there are drugs. Paul Strauss, a Phoenix teacher who blogs about his eighth-grade class at www.strausser.blogspot.com, recently asked his students if they knew a 13- or 14-year-old who'd already tried drugs. "Conservatively, I would say that 80 percent of my 140 students raised their hands," he says. "I told them (and this is true) the biggest scandal that happened my eighth-grade year was somebody caught smoking a cigarette behind the gym! It is sooo scary how fast these kids are being forced to grow up."

With early-adolescents facing escalating social pressures, it should be no surprise that some teachers are wary about embracing wholeheartedly the new rigorous regimen. They don't want to sacrifice the special support they believe their kids need. (One middle-school principal put it this way: Number one, my job is to keep them safe.)

It's all about balance, says Sondra Cooney, a former teacher who led the Southern Regional Education Board's middle grades initiative until 2002. "The most impressive results come from schools where they pair that no-excuses attention to academics with social support."

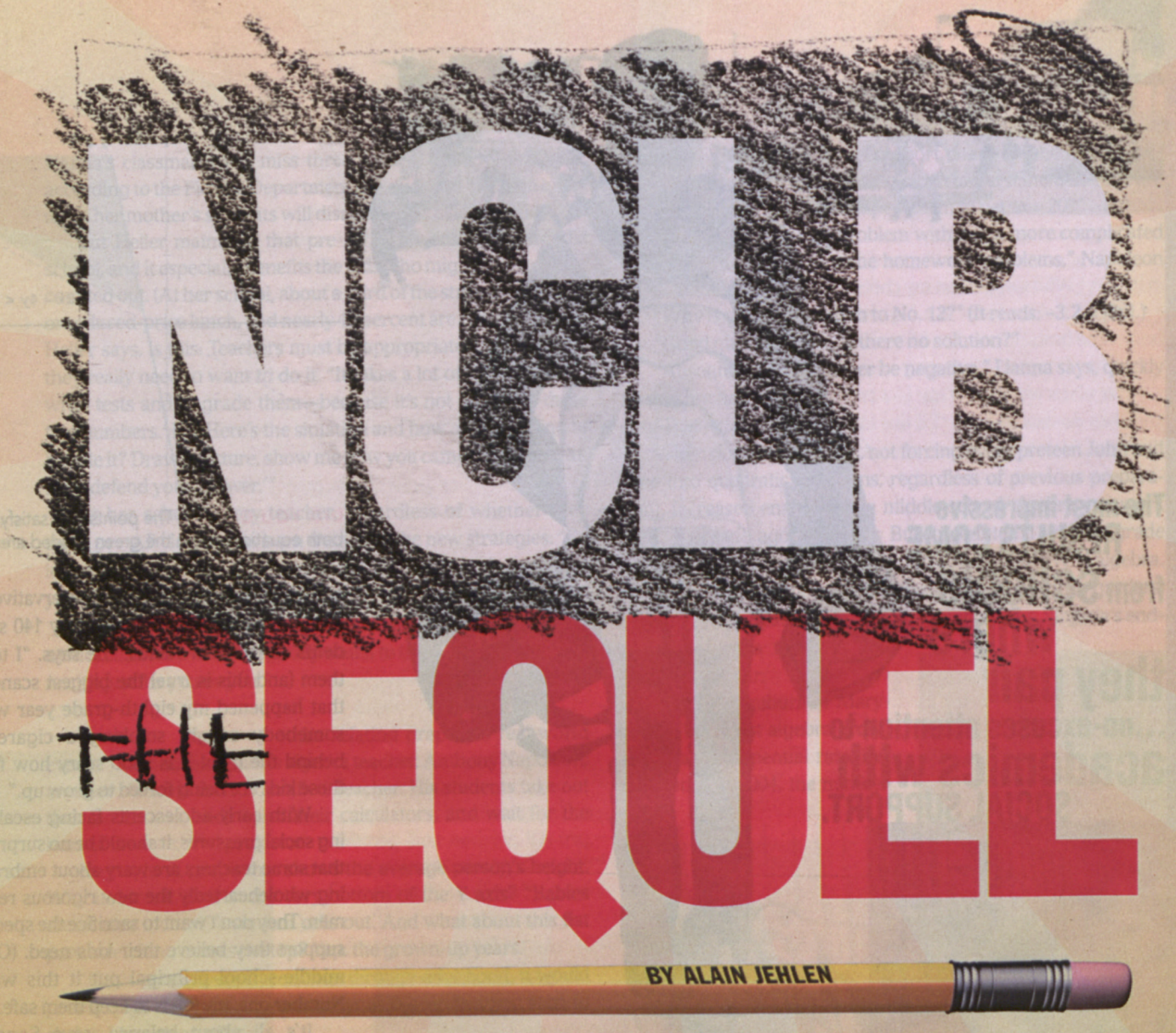
After all, they're still kids. Consider Lianna. When she and her friends are feeling really wacky during rehearsals for their strings quartet, they switch musical instruments. Lianna picks up Colleen's viola. Even crazier, Connor gives up his cello for an eensy-weensy violin, which he sits upright on the chair, between his khaki-clad legs, as if it's a shrunken cello.

"This is terrible! I cannot read alto clef!" Lianna cries, stumbling over the viola's alto lines, her bow hand shaking from hysterical laughs. "No, really, this is crazy! We can't do this!"

"It's great!" Colleen crows, as she attacks the dynamic soprano line of *Pirates of the Caribbean*. Meanwhile, Connor grins wildly. "What in the world are you doing?" cries a classmate, as she walks into the quartet's practice room. "Oh my God, this I've got to hear!"

With little preparation, it's chaos. Pure chaos. But then, they concentrate. They hear a few good notes. They smile. And, for just a few bars, it's really good music. nea

Send comments on this story to mflannery@nea.org.



BY ALAIN JEHLEN

The new Congress will change the law. You can help decide how.

"No Child Left Behind"—the powerful federal law with the noble title and the punishing provisions—is due to expire this September. But that won't be the end of it. NCLB will be reborn. That much is almost certain. What's not clear is how the new version will be different from the old.

The new Congress includes dozens of freshmen legislators with relatively little understanding of how NCLB really works, along with hundreds of veteran members, many of whom also don't get it. The law was adopted with strong bipartisan support, so legislators from both parties need to hear from NEA members.

NCLB is the current incarnation of President Lyndon Johnson's Great Society education law, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. It is by far the biggest federal education program, dedicated from the start to closing the achievement gaps, mostly through the Title I program for low-income children.

Every few years, this law is amended and then renewed. The test-and-punish provisions in today's version of the law are the result of changes made the last time the law came up for renewal.

With the next revision opportunity approaching, NEA lobbyists are preparing for an epic battle. They are arming themselves with stories from NEA members about what NCLB law looks like in the classroom, and they are continuing to build a wide-ranging alliance called the Forum on Educational Accountability that now includes 100 religious, civil rights, educational, and other organizations. These organizations agree on a variety of changes that must happen if NCLB is to live up to its high-sounding name.

Those changes include using multiple indicators of student achievement instead of NCLB's overwhelming reliance on one-size-fits-all standardized tests. (For more information on the alliance and its joint statement, visit www.nea.org/ref?2331.)

Besides these organizations, NEA also expects broad, bipartisan support for reform from state education leaders and legislators—people one step closer to the schools than Congress—who perhaps see the problems more clearly. Studies in state after state have shown that almost every public school in the country is doomed eventually to be rated a failure under current provisions.

Despite mounting evidence that the law itself is failing, the current Administration has signaled its intention to defend the status quo. "I talk about No Child Left Behind like Ivory soap: It's 99.9 percent pure or something," Education Secretary Margaret Spellings said recently. "There's not much needed in the way of change."

But NEA Executive Committee member Becky Pringle says a grassroots effort can overcome resistance at the top.

"Members of Congress—most of them—do pay attention to their constituents. NEA has members in every congressional district, and if they speak up, we can get Congress to see the light," she says.

Pringle heads an NEA advisory committee that held hearings and consulted with members across the country in putting together NEA's agenda of essential changes in NCLB.

"Our changes wouldn't just eliminate the damage," Pringle points out. "We want more than that. We want the law to help us carry out the original purpose of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act—to close the achievement gaps."

For more on NEA's efforts to win a better law, visit www.nea.org/ref?2328.

Send comments on this story to ajehlen@nea.org.

The View From Up Close

To members of Congress, NCLB is 1,100 pages of law. To NEA members, it's individual student lives that are changed when the law collides with the classroom. Here are a few of the many stories NEA has collected from educators in its effort to help Congress understand what's happening and what needs to change. To be part of that conversation, contact your Senators and members of Congress. It's easy and it works. Visit **www.nea.org/ref?2329**.

You'll find more stories—and can add your own—at **www.nea.org/ref?2323**.

"Educators' voices don't seem to matter."

Last year we didn't meet our goals. So mid-year, the state arrived with all kinds of experts going through our classrooms and criticizing our instruction. All grade levels were given strict daily schedules: all math and language in about four hours before lunch. No P.E. No health. No social studies. No arts. No more curricular trips. No music or chants or raps in the morning.

I am a National Board Certified Teacher. Young children need teaching strategies that meet multiple learning modalities. They need to feel creative. But my voice and other educators' voices don't seem to matter anymore. If teachers don't follow the program, we're reprimanded, written up, given poor evaluations, told to leave. How can a country claim to respect education when they don't respect educators?

LAURA McCUTCHEON *Santa Fe Springs, California*

"NCLB punishes teachers working in at-risk schools."

I used to work in an "at-risk," low socio-economic school. The school had not met AYP for three years. I transferred to a school in a middle class neighborhood that was closer to my house. This school did well on AYP.

My fellow teachers at the at-risk school were highly qualified professionals who also work hard. NCLB punishes teachers working in at-risk schools for things they have no control over. Children cannot learn if they have no health care, food to eat, and stable homes with responsible parents.

ROY MENDEZ *Henderson, Nevada*

"'I hate English!'"

In the last four years, because of student scores, our department has had to totally revamp our English II curriculum. We met for many, many hours and plotted out English II every day of the year, down to page numbers. Every teacher is teaching the same material at the same time. We did this to not only make sure we were covering every objective, but also because we were under great pressure from our district administrators to prove we were doing our jobs. In standardizing our curriculum, we had to eliminate most creative student projects, in-depth class discussions, thematic research opportunities, and group work.

I am a National Board Certified Teacher with extensive training in using music and art in my classroom. I lost almost every opportunity to use these important lesson enhancers.

PHOTO: KEVIN CANNON

Kids went from saying, "Mrs. Meigs' English class is so cool; she uses music all the time!" to "I hate English II!"

KIMBERLY MEIGS
Tahlequah, Oklahoma

KIMBERLY MEIGS

"Finish your workbooks!"

Young children learn best through hands-on, real-life experiences that engage the complete child. Since the inception of NCLB, such practices have been swept aside in favor of rote memorization of facts and figures.

"Stop talking and finish your workbooks!" Hearing this sentence come from my own mouth stopped me in my tracks and sent chills up my spine. Day upon day of workbook page completion is inappropriate for young learners who long to experience, play, act, create, draw, explore, invent, sing, experiment, and yes, read, recite, write, and count. More than heartbreaking, it is unfair and just plain wrong.

HEATHER MILDON *Anchorage, Alaska*

"Our school's goal was to help only those who may be able to pass."

I had a third-grade student who was far below grade level. She needed extra help. Our Reading Recovery teacher said that she could not accept her into her class because this student was so far behind, she didn't have a chance of passing. She said that our school's goal was to help only those who may be able to pass if given a little help because it is better to have a few students fail badly than to have many fail by just a little. So are we leaving students behind because of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act? I think so.

VELLA TRADER *Delton, Michigan*

VELLA TRADER

"We don't have time to read books."

I used to be a great teacher. Last year, I realized I had become something else. I was the proud teacher of English-language learners. I spent 10–12 hours every day planning lessons and designing curriculum that would not only teach them English, but expand their world. My students read Shakespeare and performed their own versions of *Romeo and Juliet*. My students acted out the courtroom scene from *To Kill a Mockingbird* and wrote papers about racism. These projects changed their lives. I have had former students come back to me years later and tell me the exact moment they experienced transformation. Jacob Martinez told me, "I knew I could work in the computer industry when we made that Web site. Today I am a project manager for Sony PlayStation." Gabriela Nunez told me, "I had the confidence to attend college after being in your class. I knew I could read and think about great books."

My students don't do any of these things anymore. We prepare for tests and are tested. I have been forced to squander 17 days of class time because of standardized tests. [One] student said, "I heard we were going to read some cool books this year and we've only read two." Tears welled in my eyes as I replied, "We don't have time to read books in English class." I'm sorry kids, I'm so sorry.

STEPHANEE JORDAN *Hampton, Illinois*

How the feds could help close achievement gaps

The 27-member committee charged with planning NEA's efforts to change and improve the No Child Left Behind law started out by listening to members around the country.

Here's a short summary of what they heard:

Visit www.nea.org/ret?2328 for the latest on NEA's effort to win a better law.

What HURTS our ability to educate kids

- Measuring school success exclusively by test scores narrows the curriculum by making schools teach to the test
- Failure to acknowledge educators' success when they take on the tough work of helping students who start out below grade level and whose students make significant gains
- One-size-fits-all formulas that do not recognize the individual needs of students
- Inflexible "highly qualified" teacher and education support professional provisions that hinder the recruitment and retention of qualified educators

What would HELP us educate kids better

- Measuring school success based on assessment of student learning over time using multiple indicators
- Small class sizes to improve student achievement and close achievement gaps
- Assessments that measure higher-order thinking and problem-solving to help students prepare for life in the 21st century
- Providing tools and resources such as relevant professional development planned with the input of educators that maximizes their knowledge, skills, and abilities and provides continuous growth
- Mentoring that provides time for new teachers to meet and work with their mentors
- Programs that foster parental involvement and community engagement

PHOTOS TOP: BRANDI SIMONS; CENTER: JOHN LACKO; BOTTOM: DIGITALVISION

The Many Moods of Teacher Blogs

A struggling student grasps a new concept. A parent calls to thank you for the extra help you gave her child. Your lesson plan is met with vacant stares. The emotional highs and lows of the average school day could shatter a mood ring, but at least now you know you're not alone. Hundreds of your fellow educators are blogging about the triumphs, trip-ups, and trivialities of the teaching life to match the many moods of you.

—CINDY LONG

Disheartened

>> From 5:30 p.m. until 8 p.m., I sat at my desk with only the hum of the heating system to keep me company. Not one of my 13 students had a parent show up. Not after all my calling, my cajoling, my coaxing and mailed letters home. I returned home stunned, hollow, and a lot more wise about why my emotionally disturbed students may have such intense behavior issues.

—Yeah, That'll Teach You a Lesson

Appreciative

>> One of the janitors came back to my room at night and fixed my printer. The same janitors [who] instantly clean up bodily fluid, fix broken lightbulbs, close my windows when I forget, climb ladders to get Jose off of the roof when he decides it would be a good idea to hang out up there, and rescue me when I get trapped in the school yard are now fixing my computers. Janitors are the unsung heroes of my classroom. *—Closing the Gap in NYC*

Childish

>> It's a bummer having to grow up and be responsible and not be half as selfish.

—Happychyck

Worldly

>> Friday was Teacher's Day in Turkey. I guess it started because at some point in his history, Ataturk was a teacher....New teachers finish their internship periods and take an oath on teacher's day, and become "real" teachers. *—Öğretmen*

Observant

>> Overheard in the hallway: "These teachers act like they run this place!"

—Today's Homework

Old

>> Today a student asked me if I'd ever heard of the song "Ghostbusters."... I started singing it....Trying to make a connection with me, she says, "Yeah, I like to listen to old-fashioned songs a lot, too."

—Apples to Apples

Insecure

>> Sometimes it's so hard to not feel personally insulted when students are bored, or they think an assignment is "dumb."...I want all my students to like me, listen to me and trust me—but that's not always the case. *—Edwize*

Motherly

>> Your first year is not going to be easy. It's a little like having a newborn baby—you're sleep deprived, and your schedule is all messed up. You have...responsibility for...little people that need constant care and attention and tend to emit loud, howling cries despite your best attempts to anticipate and respond to them....There ought to be a new diagnosis for PNTD: Post New Teacher Depression. Brooke Shields could bring it into the public awareness by appearing on *Oprah* and Tom Cruise could tell all new teachers just to take vitamins. *—Amy Loves Books*

Solipsistic

>> I AM ANGERED by people who work in education but don't seem to like kids.
I LOVE sneaking "Buttered Popcorn" jelly-beans out of my desk drawer during class.
I NEED whiteboards that actually erase.
I LIKE putting up bulletin boards in my classroom. Am I a freak?
I CARE about the state of public schools.

—One Hundred Farmers

Prudent

>> My co-teacher and I have a system for the pencil-less: We provide a stubby, little golf pencil for the period, but only if the borrower gives us something of value first....At the end of the period, the student gets her iPod (or whatever) back and we get our pencil. Since we instituted this system, we haven't lost a single pencil from our box. *—California Teacher Guy*

Paranoid

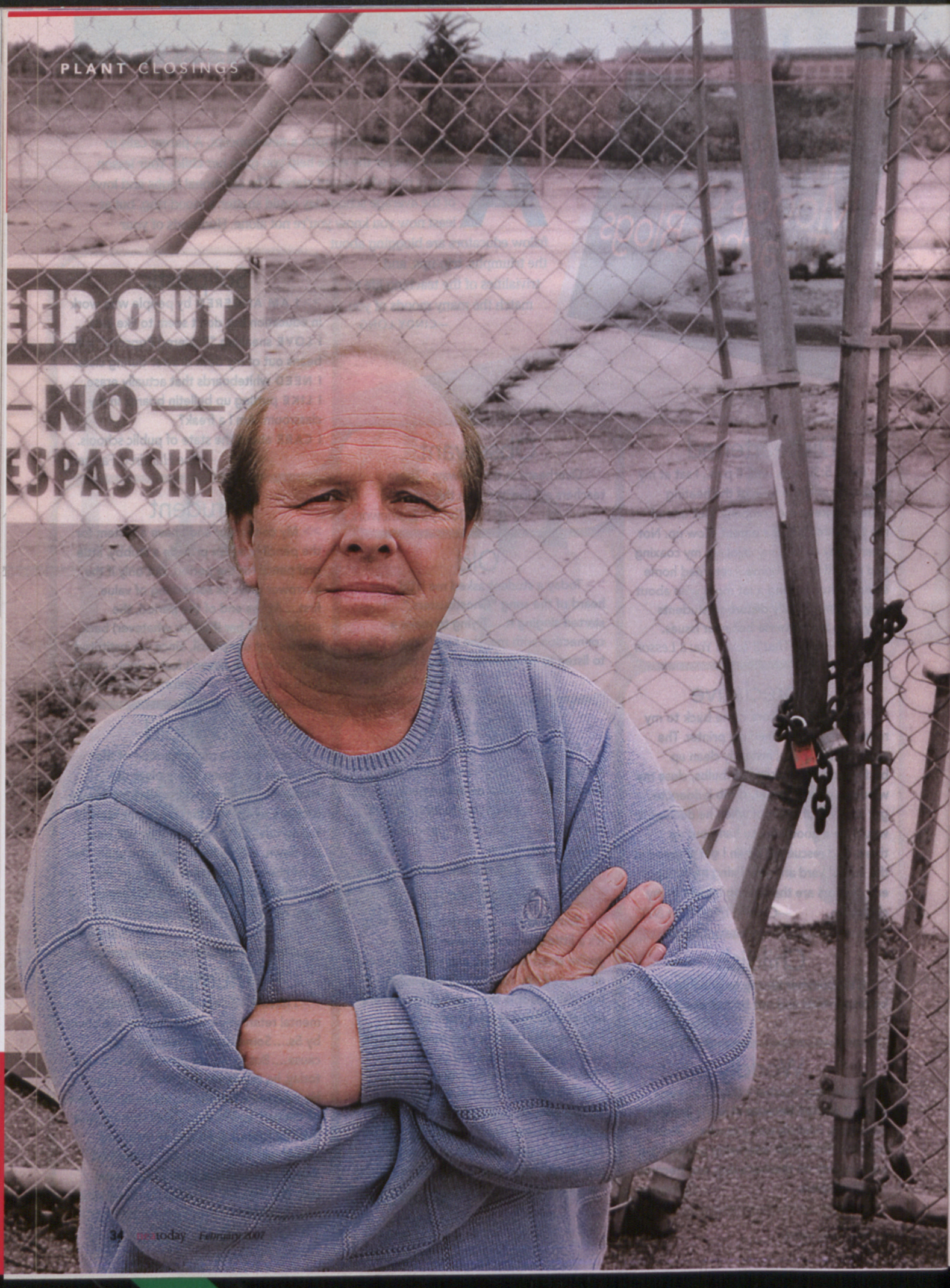
>> I'm afraid the mere mention of the ridiculous goings-on at my place of employment will somehow alert my administrators to the fact that I'm, quite literally, telling tales out of school, they will track me down, and I'll be fired on the spot. This is, of course, completely insane, as the administrator to whom I report cannot even run a PowerPoint presentation....

—Edumacational

Triumphant

>> I have a 13-year-old student with mental retardation who is learning to count by 5s....Some days, it feels like a lost cause....But as we sat down for math class today, he called me over for "a surprise." He counted a handful of nickels on his own all the way to 45 cents. I was floored. And then he says...I practiced all weekend when I was herding sheep....I didn't let myself stop practicing until I got home with the sheep." *—On the Reservation*

PHOTO: CHRISTOPHER WATERS


EP OUT
NO
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THE END OF THE LINE

When an auto plant closes, schools feel the pain, too. With at least six states facing plant shutdowns or cutbacks, what's happening in Flint, Michigan, might soon be happening in your area.

BY CYNTHIA KOPKOWSKI

It's hard to miss the '49 Buick Roadmaster Riviera parked in the concourse at the Flint, Michigan, airport. With its audacious robin egg blue paint and chrome bumpers shining like mercury, it is the sleek, metallic embodiment of what one Flint teacher refers to as a time "when Flint was." The massive factory that produced that car went under the bulldozer in 1999, leaving behind a vast, weed-choked parking lot. Like many of the automotive giants and parts manufacturers whose factories once made the city a bustling industrial hub, Buick left Flint for more economically advantageous climes.

When the last car rolls off the assembly line at a plant, the repercussions roll right into the hallways of area schools. While the so-called "rust belt" has suffered for decades, a growing number of cities across the country face plant closings over the next few years. General Motors plans to cut 30,000 hourly jobs and close or downsize operations at roughly a dozen factories in the United States and Canada. Ford Motors, in turn, is eliminating 25,000 to 30,000 factory positions. Closings or cutbacks are coming in Georgia and Alabama, Oklahoma and Oregon, and Missouri and Michigan.

They always seem to be coming in Michigan. At least 6,300 jobs will be affected there in the next two years because of the closings announced by GM and parts manufacturer Delphi. Between 1996 and 2005, Flint alone lost more than half of its manufacturing jobs, according to the Brookings Institution. And those losses came on top of the 30,000 jobs that disappeared in the 1980s.

"This used to be a very optimistic community, but with the drastic changes in a small amount of time, it isn't now," says United Teachers of Flint President Steve Burroughs, whose local's membership has dropped from 1,600 to a little over 1,200 in the past five years. In 1980, there were 33,000 students in Flint schools. Now there are 16,500, and 15 schools have closed. "Teachers are getting pink-slipped and they're moving elsewhere," says Burroughs. "When you close a school, you kill a community."

Last spring, 155 educators in Flint received pink slips, an annual rite of spring for many Michigan teachers. Shortly before this school year began, they were recalled (the pink slips are often a strategy used by districts to balance budgets, says Burroughs), but the stress was overwhelming. "It's the uncertainty," says Washington Elementary School teacher Sue Gladstone, who has been pink-slipped six of the 10 years she's taught in Flint. "Even if you get called back in, they've stolen the opportunity to properly prepare for the year."

When a plant closing or downsizing announcement comes, there is often some lag time before educators start feeling the effects, says Margaret Trimer-Hartley, communications director for the Michigan Education Association (MEA). "Usually it's up to about two years before people say they can't find any work and then pick up and move." Once the exodus begins, school boards and administrators mull school closings, and pink slips arrive. MEA UniServ Director Barbara Bouknight says figuring out how to help the increasing number of affected teachers is like "figuring out how to eat an elephant."

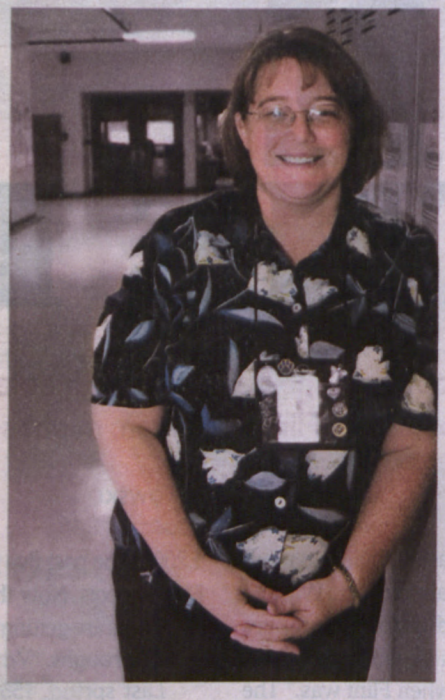
When teachers head to other areas of the country in search of better job security, their departures and school closures leave the educators that remain overworked in crowded schools. At one Flint high school, a teacher has 18 special education students in her regular class, says Burroughs. At another, he says seventh- through 12th-graders mingle in one building. Even more bad news looms on the horizon. According to the school district, nearly half of the teachers in Flint are approaching retirement. That leaves union leaders like Burroughs to wonder where the new teachers are going to come from. A city with a collapsing econ-

Steve Burroughs of United Teachers of Flint stands in front of the closed Buick plant. At right, the crumbling Pierson School.

PHOTOS: JIM WEST

omy is not typically an attractive option for talented and enthusiastic recruits.

Flint is now one of the poorest urban communities in Michigan. Once-proud school buildings have fallen into decay around the city, windows smashed, debris piled in the parking lots, spray paint scrawled across bricks. At Pierson Community School, which awaits demolition, thieves have stripped the building's copper piping for resale. Thousands of homes languish on the market. Michigan as a whole has the dubious distinction of claiming eight of the 20 worst housing markets monitored by the federal government. Quality of life indicators, like infant mortality statistics, are grim.



"It's sad when you know what it used to be like," says Burroughs, shaking his head as he drives through yet another blighted section of town. And Burroughs does remember. He grew up in Flint. His father worked in the auto factories, and he did too, rising through the ranks to become a United Auto Workers representative. In his youth, the parking lots of the auto plants were jammed around the clock with workers entering and exiting the massive factories for three different shifts. A howling five o'clock factory whistle was his signal to come home for dinner. Driving around that same time on a recent workday revealed parking lots with only a few hundred cars dwarfed by the expanse of crumbling asphalt lots surrounding them. "This used to be a very active community, very crowded," Burroughs says. "That's all gone now. Making kids continue to dream in this environment is our biggest challenge."

It's not just cities such as Flint, where the auto industry is the only game in town, that are affected by factory closings. Last year's closing of the General Motors plant in Oklahoma City put pressure on the Midwest City-Del City School District immediately. The plant had been the area's second-largest employer, behind Tinker Air Force Base. "It doesn't just mean the plant is gone," says Jamie McCoy, president of the Mid-Del Association of Classroom Teachers. "All kinds of related businesses are gone already, like the companies that would transport the cars." The loss of nearly $50 million from the local tax rolls—which helped pay for the district's 26 schools—means school officials must now lobby the legislature annually to make up the difference, McCoy says. "We know other towns in the country were more greatly impacted, but we're definitely feeling an impact here," she says.

Closings affect the entire community. Stress at home spills over into the classroom. "The children feel it," Burroughs says. That in turn weighs on teachers, on top of their worries about their own job status. "There is definitely an increase in the stress level of our teachers in recent years," Bouknight says. As a result, holding meetings for educators to share their concerns and publicizing the Employee Assistance Program are necessities.

During a recent lunch break, Washington Elementary teachers collapsed into chairs and couches in their lounge. The school sits less than a half-mile from an AC Delco sparkplug factory that now employs a fraction of its original workforce. The school's population has fallen from 700 to 500. "So many parents have moved and our transient rate is so high," says teacher Karen Christian. "Rent money is running out, and they need to move. So then we don't know what to expect." As schools close around the city, children are reshuffled into new facilities, and busing increases, drawing the ire of parents. "They're frustrated, and they come to us wondering what the effect on their children will be," she says. "Meanwhile, we're panicking that it's going to be us [getting pink slips.]"

Christian grew up in Flint, shopping at the mom-and-pop stores downtown and going to the city center for the Fourth of July fireworks. Those stores have long since been shuttered, and she doesn't feel safe taking her family downtown for the fireworks anymore. Seven of the houses on her childhood block are for sale.

The misery feeds into another struggle in states like Michigan, where manufacturing has traditionally been the lifeblood of the economy: it's what Trimer-Hartley calls the "tradition of undervaluing education." It is evidenced in public opinion polls conducted by groups like the Your Child Michigan coalition, which learned in 2005 that only one in four parents in the state believes getting a good education is essential to getting ahead in life. "Our state does not value education enough to participate in the knowledge economy," says Trimer-Hartley.

When teachers head to other areas of the country in search of better job security, their departures and school closures leave the educators that remain overworked in crowded schools.

For NEA members, plant closures have direct ramifications. Automotive unions are increasingly forced to agree to contracts with higher health care costs and, in some states, cuts to retirement benefits. When it comes time to negotiate educators' contracts, pressure builds on NEA leaders to accept cuts, too, Trimer-Hartley says. "The folks on the other side of the table say, 'Well, if the auto workers are willing to take cuts, what about the teachers?'" Even districts that enjoy positive fund balances are asking the union for health care co-pays. "Employers believe they have the upper hand, and they're taking advantage," says MEA UniServ Director Jacqueline Thomas.

Understanding that link is crucial. "We see a similar down-

Opposite: "We can't go any further down," says teacher **Karen Christian** of her hometown. Above: Elementary teacher **Sue Gladstone** has received pink slips six of the 10 years she's taught in Flint. "Even if you get called back in, they've stolen the opportunity to properly prepare for the year."

turn when the private sector is making the decision to cut," says Bill Raabe, director of NEA Collective Bargaining and Member Advocacy. Along with pressure on health care and benefits, "there is pressure in the state legislature to look at decreasing pensions," Raabe cautions.

Besides standing in solidarity with their union counterparts in affected industries, educators should be prepared to defend their traditional, defined-benefit retirement plans and advocate for changes to the U.S. health care system, which leaves 47 million uninsured, Raabe says. Closer to home, being armed with research is key. In Flint, local Association officials said that having the Michigan Education Association provide a five-year analysis of the school district's spending was critical to fighting back on proposed cuts.

Not everything, however, is gloom and doom in the auto industry. In Vance, Alabama, a Mercedes plant opened in the late 1990s. It's since doubled in size, bringing with it a host of related businesses and factories there and to nearby Brookwood. That's where 12th-grade economics teacher Sheila Hocutt-Remington watched her school grow from 700 students to 1,200. Ten new rooms are being added. Construction started recently on a new elementary school and the combined middle and high school split into two facilities.

Once a mining town, Brookwood saw the Mercedes plant bring a housing boom, improved school facilities, and more racial diversity to the classroom. Students participate in high-tech apprentice programs at the factory, and teachers benefit from added job security. "It brings in a tax base that has increased money for our schools and programs," says Hocutt-Remington, who incorporates the impact of the auto industry on the town into her lessons.

Back in Flint, there is little cause for enthusiasm. There is only resignation, and the belief of Christian—shared by many teachers and union officials—that "we can't go any further down."

Departing visitors who wander into the airport gift shop find a colorful display of diecast toy cars next to the cash register. Turning them in hand reveals tiny, detailed hood ornaments and nameplates of storied American car companies that once made places like Flint boomtowns. There's a fire-engine red Chevrolet Camaro, a green Ford pickup truck, a Buick convertible. Turning them over reveals a small sticker: Made in China. nea

Send comments on this story to ckopkowski@nea.org.

PHOTOS: JIM WEST

The Discip

Steven Johnston doesn't send unruly students to the principal's office. He's one of a growing number of teachers whose job it is to set the tone for students at his school.

BY TIM WALKER

Kenny sits comfortably in the chair outside the office. He'd ordinarily be in science lab now, but he caused enough of a disruption for his teacher to send him upstairs. This is not his first visit—not by a long shot—but Kenny says he's a pretty well-behaved student overall. As a freshman? Not so much.

"I was a punk, getting in trouble all the time," he says.

Kenny (all student names have been changed) is now a junior at Quincy High School in Quincy, Massachusetts, a "grey collar" suburb of Boston. He has racked up more than his share of discipline referrals, logging many hours with one Steven Johnston—or, as he's known to most of the students, "Mr. J."

"Hi Mr. J." Kenny looks up as Johnston approaches.

"Why are you here?" he asks as he begins to read the teacher's note.

"I was waving my pencil across the sprinkler in science lab."

"Why were you doing that?" Johnston asks.

"Lab can be boring as hell," Kenny replies.

"Boring as *heck*."

"Boring as heck."

Johnston motions the student into his office and closes the door. A few minutes later, Johnston sends Kenny back to lab with a note to the teacher instructing him to send him back for any issues. "He's a good kid," Johnston says. "Believe me, two years ago, Kenny would have set that sprinkler off." Johnston walks over to his file cabinet and pulls the student's file. "Let's see: cutting class, disrupting class, smoking, tardiness, cutting class again, tardiness again, out of the school perimeter. Yeah, Kenny's mom was definitely on my speed dial back then."

On this fall day, Kenny is just the latest in a convoy of Quincy High students who have been diverted to Johnston's office for a variety of offenses, including tardiness, class disruptions, and leaving school grounds. All in all, it's a fairly typical day for this "discipline dean," one of four teachers at the school whose time is largely devoted to student discipline issues.

In the past, Quincy High's assistant principal was saddled with coordinating discipline, as is the case in most high schools. In the late '90s, a new administration decided that behavioral issues warranted attention beyond what the school's assistant principal, charged with planning the school's academic program, could reasonably afford. So the school appointed four deans of students to lead the design and implementation of the school's discipline policies—to "set the tone," in Johnston's words, on how to create and maintain order at Quincy High.

Now in his 13th year at Quincy (he's also a proud member of Quincy High's Class of '83), Johnston thrives on his interaction

Quincy High Dean of Students Steven Johnston comforts an upset student. He believes earning the trust of students is vital to his job.

pline Dean

with students and the collaboration with the many players involved in their lives—the school resources officer, nurse, parole officers, social services, and, of course, the parents.

"Steven knows that his job is to help create a stable learning environment," explains Quincy Principal Frank Santoro. "But he knows that this requires him to work with these students and their families and be their advocate."

Teachers who trade in their classroom keys for a more administrative role are unusual, but discipline-focused deans can be found at schools across the country. Mark Karadimos followed a similar path at J. Sterling Morton East High School, just outside of Chicago. With a student population topping 3,200, Morton East High couldn't manage its behavioral issues without four full-time deans. A former math teacher, Karadimos strives to help students find the connection between their behavior and their chances for success.

"In a classroom, students often just feel the rigor, but don't see the relevance," he says. "My job as dean ultimately is to help students understand that we want to help them to do well in life."

"LAHN DUONG IS HERE?" Johnston shouts in mock-surprise to his secretary, Ruthie. "Are you out there, Lahn Duong? Come on in!"

It's a little before 9 a.m. The young Vietnamese student appears in Johnston's doorway, looking sleepy-eyed, disheveled, and a little sheepish.

"How are you, my friend?"

"I'm late," he responds quietly. His English is slow but functional.

"Listen—I'm worried," Johnston says, turning serious. "You're not doing well in math, and that's your first period. How are you going to pass math if you are always late?"

The student shrugs. "I don't know. I hope so."

"Me, too!"

Most of the city's Asian community, which makes up 15 percent of Quincy's overall population, lives in North Quincy. The absence of an English-language learner (ELL) program at North Quincy High, however, means a longer trip across town for Lahn Duong and many of the 300 other ELL students enrolled at Quincy High. Johnston, while aware that the commute can be a burden, tells Lahn Duong he will simply have to wake up earlier. Still, he plans to work with others in the school to juggle his schedule and move math to second or third period.

"He can't be tardy, but I can't have him failing math, either," he says.

Johnston makes it a point to know each student's academic history and any relevant details about the teen's life outside of school. He began cultivating a rapport with students during his years as a special education teacher. Johnston moved into his current position so he could work with a more expansive student population. As dean, he weaves together strands of proactive and positive discipline techniques. Although he avoids a one-size-fits-all approach, he does subscribe to certain doctrines: treat each case individually, foster collaboration and communication, win the trust of the students, and adapt to changes in the community. And he won't let any student leave his office without hearing words of encouragement.

Johnston's relationship with the students is aided by how Quincy High divides the student population among its four deans. Each is assigned one of the four classes. Johnston is the

PHOTOS: ©2006 SARAH GILBERT

dean for the class of 2008, so he has been working with the same kids for three years. That's important, he says, because misbehavior-prone students are much easier to steer toward a more constructive path early on in their high school career.

His classroom experience also makes him particularly sensitive to one of the many challenging elements of his work: balancing the needs of the student in his office with the overburdened teacher's need for a stable classroom. Clear communication is key. Johnston asks the teacher to be as specific as possible in the referral note. To merely write "Johnny is misbehaving" doesn't provide Johnston and his colleagues sufficient information.

"If they want me to keep the student out of their classroom, that needs to be clearly stated in the note. I'll do that," he says. "If not, I'll address the situation a different way and find solutions that won't keep the student out of class."

At Morton East High, Karadimos and the other deans urge teachers to intervene before sending students to the dean's office. Not making a viable effort to address disruptions will communicate that the teacher has lost control of the classroom, he says.

Navigating through the school system's intricate network of personalities and territories can be tricky for a dean, a position that bridges the gap between teachers and administration. Johnston says there's one indisputable intangible needed to perform the job effectively.

"Social skills. You either have 'em or you don't," he says. "Knowing the governing laws of the school and state—great. Years and years of formal study—terrific. But all that will be undermined if you don't know how to communicate properly with your colleagues and win the respect and trust of a diverse student population."

LATER IN THE AFTERNOON, Toni, looking a little bewildered, sits across from Johnston.

"How did you know that, Mr. J?"

A conflict between Toni and one of her classmates was exacerbated by an impolite exchange posted on MySpace. The classmate confided in Johnston that a problem with Toni was brewing and asked him to help. Of course, he doesn't tell her that.

"I hear things in the air, Toni. Sometimes the walls talk to me. It really doesn't matter—you cannot let your differences with her affect your schoolwork."

Before this exchange, the two had been discussing Toni's grades. "This is a key quarter for you, kid," Johnston reminded her. These words, still punctuating the air a few minutes later, seemed to belittle the significance of an online spat.

"You're right," Toni replies. "Thanks, Mr. J."

After Toni walks out the door, Johnston spins around in his chair. "MySpace—arrrgh!" he laughs. "The online world is just multiplying the social bridges for these kids—more openings for confrontation."

Johnston has considered trying something new—a couple of assistant principal positions have opened up recently. "Poring over data sheets or state student assessment scores? Maybe one day, but I'm not there yet," he says, "Right now, I need to work with these kids." nea

Send comments on this story to twalker@nea.org.

PHOTO: ©2006 SARAH GILBERT

Tips from a 'Discipline Dean'

When all your best classroom management strategies have failed, Steven Johnston offers a few pointers on how to work with others in the school to address disruptive behavior.

BE AS SPECIFIC AS POSSIBLE in the referral note to the discipline point person. Clearly explain the nature of the student's conduct and whether he or she should be permitted to return to class. Don't worry too much about your notes never getting delivered. Students know they'll be in a lot more trouble if they throw them away.

KEEP THE LINES OF COMMUNICATION OPEN, and, if necessary, schedule a joint meeting with both the dean/administrator and the student.

NETWORK WITH OTHER TEACHERS who have the student in their classrooms.

USE TEAM TIME AND PLANNING to deal with serious discipline cases. Although this time is usually focused on student learning, administrators will usually be flexible if the situation warrants it.

Breaking Up Is Hard To Do

A small-schools experiment suggests the key to success is teacher power.

"I was on the union executive board when the proposal was made, and I was fighting hard to throw up roadblocks. So my being a very strong supporter [now] is total heresy. I didn't expect it."

That's how English teacher Jeanine Jordan-Squire describes the 3-year-old experiment in Lima, Ohio, a low-income city of 40,000, in which the 1,200-student high school was chopped into three smaller schools.

The three schools have followed radically different courses. Jordan-Squire works at the most successful. English teacher Jill Stubbs is at the least. "The small school concept has a lot of promise," she says, "but not the way we are implementing it."

The varying results show just how much the success of a small school depends on teacher involvement.

Lima's venture is the result of a $1.1 million grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, which has funded hundreds of small schools across the country. But this grant had an unusual clause: It couldn't go forward without an OK from the educators union, a condition imposed by KnowledgeWorks, the Gates Foundation intermediary for 20 such grants in Ohio. KnowledgeWorks even hired retired Ohio Education Association Executive Director Robert Barkley as a consultant.

The money also came with 15 other "non-negotiable" conditions, one of which was "distributed leadership" (as opposed to top-down).

Linda Fox-Miller says the three schools' conflicting schedules hurt the joint music program.

Despite many teachers' skepticism, they bought in. "The Gates Foundation dangled the carrot, and off we went," says art teacher Lisa Carver. "There's no way our community could have come up with that kind of funding. We have to try the latest and greatest, and it has to be done with money."

The three schools share one building. Each set out to revamp its teaching approach to engage students and give them real-world skills. One school, with a focus on Howard Gardner's multiple intelligences theory, has done extremely well, turning skeptic Jordan-Squire into a fan. A second, "Performance-Based School," is doing so-so. By most accounts, the third, "Progressive Academy," where Stubbs works, is not doing well at all.

Why the difference? Teachers agree that a critical factor is the promised "distributed leadership." Multiple Intelligences (MI) has the full measure, for which teachers credit MI principal Jeff McClellan. "I'm incredibly impressed by him—and I do not have a history of liking administration," says Jordan-Squire. (The downside: "If I propose something, the next thing I know, I'm in charge of it," she says.) Performance-Based has teacher participation, but less of it. And at Progressive Academy, teachers report they have very little voice in decisions. Ironically, they say, Progressive is the least progressive.

Deborah Howard, who directs KnowledgeWorks' high school programs, says originally they thought the "non-negotiables" must be in place at the start, but now they see it can take time.

Lima Education Association Co-president Lori Ruschau describes the project's first year as a "hurricane" during which the union had to file grievance after grievance to protect teachers' lunchtime and hold the number of students per teacher to the contract limits. But today, the atmosphere is much calmer.

At MI, things are not just calm, they're great. "I have never seen a group of people working together as closely," says Jordan-Squire. When a student falters, they all see it. "We meet and say, 'Can we do anything?'" Often at least one teacher has a relationship with the student and can step in.

On the minus side, some electives have been dropped.

And a potentially serious problem is emerging: Even though the schools are balanced demographically, many of the better, more motivated students are going to Multiple Intelligences, while some less motivated attend Progressive.

Will the small schools produce better scores or graduation rates? It's too soon to tell. But some teachers say the academic level is higher. Jordan-Squire says she meets some resistance to that. "One girl said, 'Why aren't you just giving us worksheets? That's what you're supposed to do.'

"No," Jordan-Squire responded, "I'm supposed to get you ready for the next phase of your life."

—ALAIN JEHLEN

PHOTO: KELLI CARDINAL

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AHNT 0207

Should parents have a say in picking their child's teacher?

YES I believe there are times when parents should have the right to request certain teachers under certain circumstances. I teach at a school district where the American Indian student population is approximately 8 percent, yet American Indian teachers represent only about 1 percent. I feel that American Indian students have a right to choose to attend the classes of American Indian teachers. If not, a large number of these students won't have an opportunity to be taught by demographically representative educational role models. Such modeling has proved to raise both academic testing outcomes and grades, as well as improving student quality of life.

While I believe that students should have the opportunity to achieve educational and intellectual multiculturalism, and that students need to interact with teachers of all demographic backgrounds, I believe parents should be able to request that their children have at least one teacher who represents their cultural or ethnic background. One of the best practices in teaching American Indian students is using native language and culture to promote success, which is often best achieved when at least one teacher shares the student's background.

CLYDE HODGE teaches eighth-grade English in Stockton, California, is chair of the SUSD Title VII/Johnson O'Malley Indian Education parent/student advisory committee, and is a member of both NEA's and CTA's American Indian/Alaska Native Caucuses.

NO It's natural for parents to want to have input into who educates their child. Children are a parent's most prized possession, and every parent wants what's best for their child. That basic and understandable parental instinct is precisely the reason why parents should not have a say in who will be their child's teacher.

Teachers, guidance counselors, administrators, and other educators see the larger picture. These professionals don't see what is best for one student without also seeing how it would impact the rest of the school community. Teachers who know the students and have experience creating successful classes in previous years work very hard to make sure each student in the school is in an optimal learning environment.

To ensure the decisions being made in a school are made to benefit all students, there cannot be special interest voices for a particular student or group of students. Placing a student in the requested teacher's class in some cases, but not in others, leaves a school open to criticism by disenfranchised parents. Parental involvement should begin when the family receives notification of the student's teacher for the year—not before.

DANIEL FONDER teaches fifth grade at Hillside Intermediate School in Bridgewater, New Jersey.

OTHER VOICES

Here's what other educators are saying on our message boards. Join the discussion by visiting www.nea.org/debate.

I THINK THE administrator needs to listen to the parent and consider the reason. However, the decision should be that of the administrator based on the previous history of the student and what is best for him or her.
LISA TUCKER, Barksdale Elementary, Clarksville, Tennessee

SINCE BECOMING A teacher, I have been requested, mostly from parents who have had me for their previous children. They know me and feel comfortable with me.

At our school, we allow 10 requests per teacher. It's first come, first served. That usually allows us room to balance our classes. However, sometimes we have problems because many teachers get very competitive for the request.
CHERIE WARD, Shasta Meadows Elementary, Redding, California

THERE ARE PROS and cons to allowing parents to choose their child's teacher. Sometimes it's a personality issue, and all personalities do not lend themselves to everyone. I would rather a child be with the teacher they feel most comfortable with. Otherwise it could be a long year for the student and the teacher.
VERONICA GREEN, Bakersfield School District, Bakersfield, California

WHAT'S YOUR OPINION?

Should we swap out sweets for nutritious snacks at school parties? Join our next debate and see your name in print! We'll choose from among the discussion board responses for a future issue of *NEA Today*. Visit www.nea.org/debate.

ILLUSTRATION: TED PITTS

Everything Red

This bulletin board idea is a lifesaver for busy teachers. Assign students an "Everything" topic and have them make and bring in items related to that topic. You can do this with any grade level; for example, kindergartners can do "Everything Red" or "Everything Five," while high schoolers create "Everything Haiku" or "Everything Henry VIII." For our Valentine's Day display, we mixed school-made valentines with commercial hearts.

To make your display, you'll need three or four 24-in. by 36-in. colored poster sheets, enough to cover your entire bulletin board. Lay the sheets down on a large workspace. Organize your material—photographs, pictures, student artwork, and lettering—on the sheets and glue them down. Laminate each poster sheet, then arrange and staple them to the bulletin board. You can pull down one bulletin board and put up another in 15 seconds, and because they're laminated, you can even use them again.

RUTH WREN
Art teacher
Atglen, Pennsylvania

VALENTINE TIPS

PASSING COMPLIMENTS

Every February, I buy large paper doilies, which the students glue onto a large sheet of red paper. Then they make a small red heart with a compliment written on it for each student in the class. Recipients glue all of their hearts onto their doily. Each child then has a doily filled with compliments about themselves. Sometimes they are really surprised at some of the compliments they receive, prompting responses such as, "I didn't know you even noticed my handwriting!"

ELAINE KELLEY
Fourth-grade teacher
Navarre, Florida

LOVE THE NET

Looking for great ideas for Valentine's Day and other holidays—including a daily calendar of serious, fun, wacky, and other special days? Check out Holidays on the Net, www.holidays.net, for crafts and recipes, e-greeting cards, calendars and celebrations—even vacation deals and a "holiday rap" blog.

WHAT MAKES YOU SMILE?

Send a fun story to Sabrina Holcomb, **sholcomb@nea.org**.

MATH WHIZ

Calculating Valentines

The math problem I gave my fourth-graders last Valentine's Day was such a powerful learning experience, I'm thinking of doing it with this year's first-graders.

QUESTION: If each student gives a valentine to everyone else in the class, how many exchanges would take place? (Note: The students are counting exchanges, not cards.)

The focus here is on what strategies and tools the students use to solve the problem. They should be able to explain their process to someone else. Did they use pictures? Writing? It's important for the kids to work out their initial confusion themselves, and giving them an opportunity to explain their thinking solidifies their understanding. [Answer Key: N x (N–1). If there are 10 students in the class, there would be 90 exchanges.]

LILIA OLIVAS
Tucson, Arizona

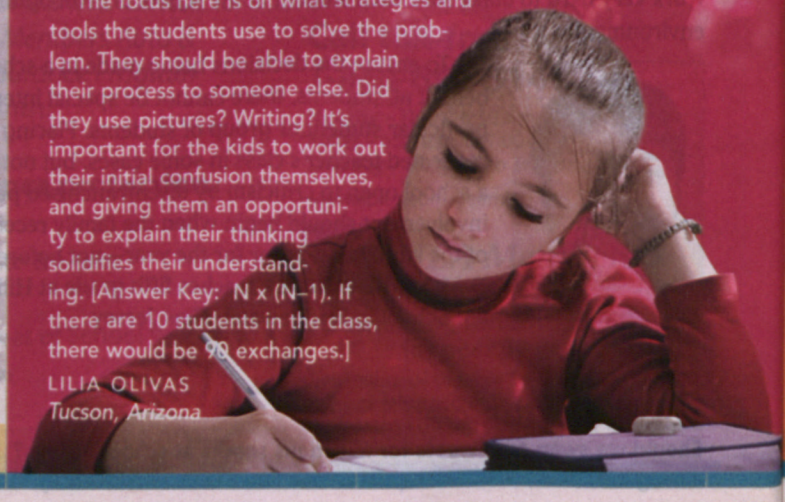


PHOTO TOP LEFT: COURTESY OF RUTH WREN; DOILY: CORBIS; HEARTS AND BUBBLES: CINDY HAGGERTY; GIRL STUDYING: PHOTOCREATE; CARTOON: MARK PARISI

Ah, Romance

Last year my reading class read *The Gift of the Magi*, O. Henry's classic story about a young couple who sell their most prized possessions to buy each other a surprise gift. The husband sells his gold watch to buy his wife a decorative comb for her long, beautiful hair. The wife sells her hair to purchase a gold chain for her husband's watch. At the end of our story questions, I asked: "Do you think the couple were wise in the gifts they bought for each other?" "Heck, no," a student quickly responded. "The husband could have gotten a lot more money for his watch on eBay!"

ELEANOR BERREY
Middle school reading teacher, Pocatello, Idaho

CARING COLLEAGUES

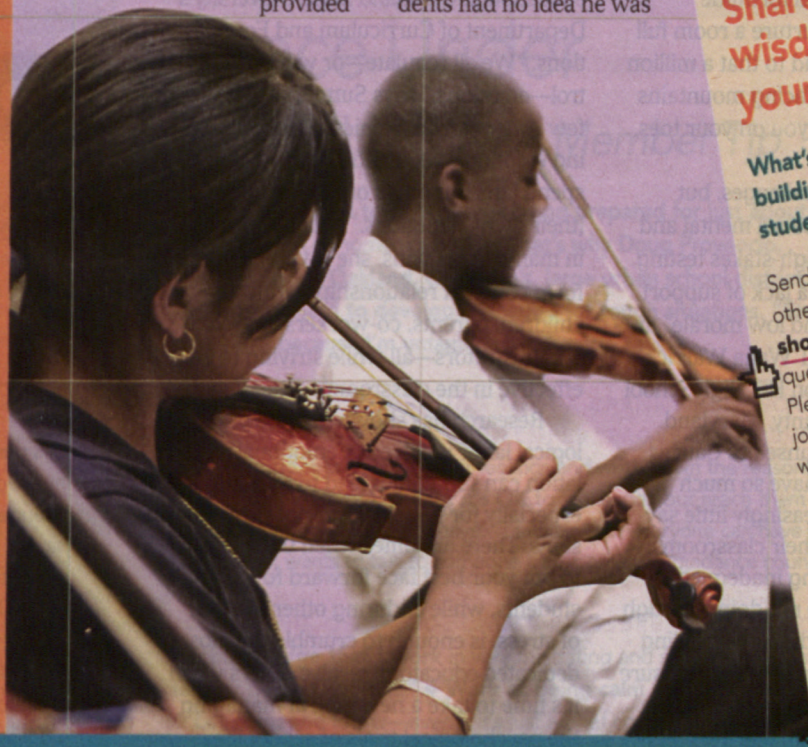
What's the nicest thing a colleague has ever done for you?

ANSWER: After just four months in my position as special education teacher in my new school district, I was diagnosed with breast cancer for the second time. Since I was new to the job, I was not eligible for the sick bank, and my school district did not carry disability. I would have been in much worse shape had it not been for my colleagues. They put together a proposition for the BOE that would allow them to donate sick days and put together a personal sick bank just for me. The board approved the proposal and gave me two months' worth of sick days, which provided me with a paycheck and, better yet, allowed the school to pick up my health benefits for that time period. This was a big help since treatment took six months and I was living on my savings. Since I had only known these people for such a short time, I was truly amazed by their generosity. I am happy to say I am, once again, healthy and back at work at a very caring school.

TINA SIMMONS
Stamford Central School
Stamford, New York

ANSWER: My first year of teaching at Central Kitsap Junior High School, I followed an incredibly successful choir teacher who unexpectedly took a job in another state. The students had no idea he was leaving and were determined to make my life miserable all year. After one particularly trying day, when I thought things were never going to improve, my band colleague, Allan Villiers, told me to get out my viola. He took me into the orchestra class, taught by Mark Sorensen, and had me play my instrument for them. The orchestra students grew incredibly excited and broke into huge applause when I was done. They all started asking me questions about my instrument and about playing music. It totally lifted my spirits, and when Allan and I walked out of the room into the hallway, he looked at me and said, "You deserved that!"

LEAH GOWERS
Orchestra teacher
Silverdale, Washington



Share your wisdom, ask your question!

What's your best advice for building relationships with your students' parents?

Send your answers to these or other questions on this page to **sholcomb@nea.org**. Or, send us a question you'd like to see posted. Please include your name, your job, and the community and state where you work.

For a weekly e-mail of questions, answers, and practical classroom tips, join Works4Me, one of NEA's most popular and useful services. Just send the message "subscribe Works4Me" (without the quotation marks) to **Lyris@list.nea.org**.

ILLUSTRATION: GLOWIMAGES; PHOTO: NATHAN HAM

Don't Lose Your Head

Few jobs are as emotionally stressful as teaching. But there are many ways to help keep burnout at bay.

BY SHEREE CRUTE

Laughter is a lifesaver in Eric Hines' fourth-grade classroom at Willow Cove Elementary in Pittsburg, California. It's his buffer against the sheer frustration of trying to fit the needs of 32 rambunctious fourth-graders into a curriculum that sometimes "takes the teaching out of teaching," says the 17-year veteran.

Diane Gonzalez has a more physical outlet for keeping her work-related emotions in check—plenty of exercise, at home or at school. "You have to manage your feelings, because the kids are on their own emotional rollercoaster," says Gonzalez, a science teacher at Chestnut Ridge Middle School in Chestnut Ridge, New York, of the mental fortitude needed to teach and nurture a room full of seventh-graders. Add to that a million teacher tasks, such as facing mountains of paperwork, to keep you on your toes, says Gonzalez.

Every job has its challenges, but teaching has its own special mental and emotional stressors. High-stakes testing, crowded classrooms, "a lack of support from administrators and low morale" are mentioned often, says T'Wana Warrick-Bell, a counselor at Oxon Hill High School in Prince George's County, Maryland, and chair of NEA's Counselors Caucus.

Because teachers have so much responsibility but increasingly little say over what goes on in their classrooms, they're at risk for feeling inadequate or concerned that they're not doing enough for students, Hines adds. As rewarding as teaching can be, combine the pressure kids may bring to school from unstable home environments with teachers' personal desire to do their best, and you've got a work environment that's a perfect incubator for emotional intensity, stress, and anxiety—even depression.

"Teaching is emotional work," explains Rosemary Sutton, a professor of education at Cleveland State University's Department of Curriculum and Foundations. "We all regulate—or work to control—emotions," says Sutton, one of the few American academics actively studying emotional regulation, "but teachers spend large amounts of time regulating [their own]...emotions." Unlike workers in many professions, she says, educators form complex relationships, with children, parents, co-workers, and administrators—all while striving to be effective in the classroom.

Research has shown that the psychological labor involved in emotional regulation can sometimes lead to burnout, especially for people in service professions. There are times when the pressure to put your best face forward for students, while enduring other sources of stress, is enough to crumble the most dedicated educator's resolve. That's when it's time to take a new look at managing the psychological trials of school life.

Surviving and Thriving

Protecting your mental health while putting joy in your job is possible, no matter how high-pressure your school is. *NEA Today* asked education experts for their advice on taming school stress and beating unhealthy emotions before they get the best of you.

FACE REALITY. Parents work longer hours than ever before, kids bring more problems to the classroom than in previous generations, and many schools lack needed resources. In short, "Society has changed...accept it and prepare for it," says J. Allen Queen, a professor of education and curriculum at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte and author of *The Frazzled Teacher's Wellness Plan.* Queen, who conducts research and designs programs to help educators deal with stress, advises that a

ILLUSTRATION: BRUCE ROLFF

well-managed classroom and a balanced life are key to handling the realities of teaching.

BALANCE THE SCALES. "In my research, I've observed that three things have to work in harmony to control negative stress," Queen says. "I use the image of a triangle: one side is time, the other side is priorities, the remaining side is natural, positive stress, and all sides must be equal. If any one side of the triangle becomes longer than the other, you're going to have almost constant distress, and that's the real threat to your mental well-being."

The solution? List your priorities. Be realistic about what you need to do to accomplish them. Then organize your time so you can satisfy those goals. Have contingency plans in place for times when kids' behavior problems or unscheduled meetings mess up your day.

If you know that organization is just not your thing, get help. It will be well worth the effort at school and at home. Seek advice from colleagues or research one of many Web sites, such as www.getorganizednow.com.

PRACTICE PREVENTION. In her research on middle school teachers, Rosemary Sutton found that educators who worked with students to create a positive classroom atmosphere had the most success controlling their own emotions. Keeping their emotions in check helped teachers be more effective in the classroom, while protecting their own psychological health.

"These teachers kept a two- or three-week diary to track when they experienced problem emotions at work so that they could look for patterns," Sutton says. Other strategies include stepping back and telling a joke to diffuse tense situations; eliminating tough lesson plans on high-stress days; keeping problem students apart; letting students know when you're not feeling well; and taking a quiet "time out" between duties by stepping into the hall, teacher's lounge, or restroom for a moment of silence to calm rattled nerves.

RECLAIM YOUR CLASSROOM. Veteran teachers and newcomers alike may want to try these resources for time-tested advice on restructuring the classroom to create and maintain a positive environment:

- Send an e-mail to JAQueen@email.uncc.edu to learn more about his classroom program that has been put to work in more than 200 schools nationwide.
- Log on to http://cte.udel.edu/TAbook/climate.html for advice from the University of Pennsylvania's education researchers.
- Try the "I Can Do It" classroom management skills program at www.nea.org/classmanagement/selfeval.html.

PUT SCIENCE TO WORK FOR YOU. "Thanks to research, we now know a great deal about negative stress and how to fend it off," Queen says. "Try eating to resist stress," advises Ronald Benner, an NEA IDEA Resources Cadre member at Madison Elementary School in Bridgeport, Connecticut. Studies show that sticking to a balanced diet and limiting sugar, caffeine, and alcohol help keep your blood sugar—and therefore your moods—on an even keel. "And see your support specialist at your school—a psychologist or counselor—or talk to fellow teachers," Benner says. Building a support network helps keep things in perspective, a great help when dealing with depression and stress. "Learn to meditate, take long walks, or just go sit in your car at recess and crank up the music, if that's what works for you," Queen says.

LIVE LIFE TO THE FULLEST. Most teachers teach for one reason—they love the job and the kids they get to encourage and help each day. But as important as teaching may be to you, Queen advises, "Don't neglect the rest of your life." Narrowing your focus and limiting your interests can also lead to depression and stress. Participate in activities outside of school—charity work, your church, a sport. Make time for family and friends and consider a new hobby. Find something that enriches you outside of your job.

The prescription for a healthy mind and spirit is easier to follow when you take good care of yourself and embrace the challenges of being an educator. Enjoy the rewards of positively contributing to hundreds of young lives while creating a nurturing, structured environment for you and your students. Each day you step into school, you'll find that your load is a little lighter. nea

ILLUSTRATION: CHRIS ANDREWS

Grace Under Pressure *NEA Member Tip*

Being a substitute teacher means being prepared for just about anything—on a moment's notice. That's why Doug Provencio, who teaches in Oakland, California's, large urban school district, has worked hard to develop strategies for tough situations. "Students are sometimes angry just because I'm unfamiliar," Provencio says.

WHETHER YOU'RE DEALING WITH A CRANKY HIGH SCHOOLER OR A THIRD-GRADER WITH A BAD TEMPER, PROVENCIO ADVISES:

- **Have students analyze** their feelings and write down the reason(s) for their frustrations or resentment.
- **Point out that it's OK** to feel anger, but teach them that how they feel can be separated from how they behave. "I explain that everyone can have a really bad day and ask if the student wants to talk to someone else, perhaps a guidance counselor," Provencio says.

TO KEEP HIS OWN COOL UNDER PRESSURE, PROVENCIO REMEMBERS TO:

- **"Acknowledge that I work** in very frustrating and stressful situations and that I'm not the only teacher dealing with this."
- **Work at being calm** and not taking things personally.
- **Let someone know**—even if it's just a brief comment in casual conversation—if you're having a really bad day.

A Historical Landmarker

A former World War II Japanese internment camp is now a designated historic site, thanks to a Colorado teacher.

WHAT WAS ONCE A SYMBOL of oppression and hatred is now one of reflection, thanks to the efforts of social studies teacher John Hopper and his Granada High School students. The Amache Japanese internment camp was one of 10 U.S. government holding facilities for Japanese-American citizens forced from their homes after the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Hopper knew of the camp since childhood because his mother used to work for a woman forced to live there. After first assigning his students 16 years ago to interview those held there, he realized both he and his students had much more to learn about its history. "What was more interesting was when I got more into it and listened to more experiences," Hopper says. "I felt deeply moved." The more firsthand accounts Hopper heard, the more he wanted to advocate for the movement to make Amache a National Historic Landmark.

Hopper created Granada High School's Amache Preservation Society, where he and his students wrote letters to Colorado congressional members. With their backing and the support of the National Park Service, National Trust for Historic Preservation, and other local organizations, Amache was finally dedicated as a National Historic Landmark last year. "It's an extremely important lesson to be learned about American citizens losing their rights in this country," Hopper says.

Granada High now even offers an elective course on Amache's preservation, and students travel across the region to speak about the camp.

—NATALIE McGILL

PEOPLE POLL

It's the month for all things lovey dovey. What's your ideal Valentine's Day date?

Hot air balloon ride—31%; Just me, a pint of fudge ripple, and a George Clooney or Scarlett Johansson movie—29%; Dinner, dancing, the works!—24%; Hitting the gym or taking a nice, long walk together—17%.

Head to www.neatoday.org to vote in March's poll:

Dancing, cooking—what reality TV competition skill would you most like to have?

A Beard With a Message

In Washington state, an educator makes national news with his unusual refusal to shave.

WASHINGTON STATE TEACHER Gary Weddle says he won't shave until suspected 9/11 mastermind Osama bin Laden is captured. He was so glued to TV in that first week following the attacks that he simply didn't shave. Now it's become a personal cause. Although he didn't lose anyone on 9/11, Weddle says he empathizes with victims' families.

At the start of every year at Ephrata Middle School, Weddle explains the beard to his students. "I tell them that I just look scary, but I'm the same nice guy inside. I want them to know that the world is more connected than we realize."

Weddle says that he has not faced any opposition from the school administration. "In fact, everyone has been very nice and supportive about this," he says.

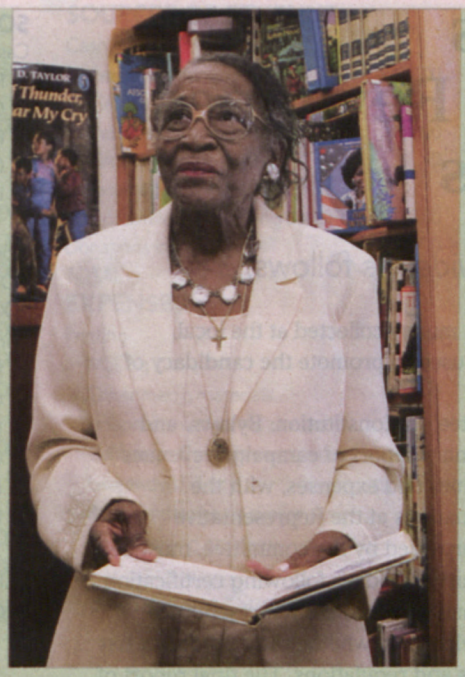
Although it has been more than five years, he has no intention of shaving prematurely. "I'm tired of the beard, but I'm not tempted to cut it."

—MISHRI SOMESHWAR

PHOTO TOP: CRYSTAL TERRELL; BOTTOM: KELLY GILLIN, *THE WENATCHEE WORLD*

Stocking the Shelves

An Alabama retired member turns a new page for one community of book lovers.



JIMMIE FELDER GREW UP WITH a rich supply of stories. She was one of seven children, the daughter of a substitute teacher and a blacksmith. "At night," she recalls, "we used to pull the mattress off a bed and sit on it, and one of us would tell a story that they had read in school. That way, we all got to hear six stories every week that we had not read."

She also read anything she could get her hands on and was promoted from the second grade after just two weeks because she could already read all the second-grade books.

That was in the days before school desegregation came to her home town of Hayneville in rural Lowndes County, Alabama. There was a White school four blocks away, but she and her siblings walked a mile to the Black school and had to stay home whenever heavy rains flooded a bridge on the way. For high school, she had to move in with relatives in Montgomery, some 25 miles away.

Felder went on to college and became an English teacher and high school librarian in Montgomery. When she retired in 1990, she persuaded the Lowndes County commissioners to commit the resources needed for a public library.

A retired member of the Alabama Education Association, Felder is still guiding the development of the library, where children enjoy and learn from stories like those she read and heard growing up. The library boasts 22,000 volumes. Felder earns a small salary as director, "but I put it all back buying books. If a college student comes in and needs a book we don't have, I just call a bookstore and buy it."

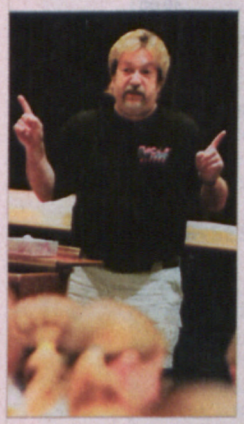
Ironically, the library is across the street from the formerly all-White school, now predominantly African-American, that she couldn't attend as a child.

—ALAIN JEHLEN

Patience, Grasshopper

Pennsylvania music teacher-turned-treasure hunter helps locate a $50,000 antique jewel in a nationwide search.

IT WAS A FAIRY TALE ending for Fred Pacolitch, courtesy of a best-selling fairy tale book. The music teacher from Hanover Middle School in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, found one of 12 jewels hidden around the country as part of a nationwide treasure hunt associated with the popular children's book, *A Treasure's Trove*. The book, written by former banking software entrepreneur Michael Stadther, tells the story of a forest whose creatures are crystallized each night by a mysterious cloud of dust.



Clues to the jewels' locations are woven into the pages, meaning that kids aren't the only ones studying the whimsical illustrations and text closely. Adult devotees like Pacolitch account for many of the 400,000 copies sold and its former spot on the *New York Times* Best Sellers list. Pacolitch's search took him from the William Penn statue in Philadelphia to New York City, hoping to find the tokens for the jewels Stadther hid in a cross-country trip in 2004.

Last summer, the teacher and a New Jersey couple he'd traded clues with in an online forum about the book found the $50,000 grasshopper jewel's token nestled in the notch of a dogwood tree in Poughkeepsie, New York. Stadther later presented them with the actual jewel—a 19th-century piece set with 85 green demantoid garnets and 25 diamonds. Once the contest officially concludes, they can sell it and split the proceeds.

For more on the treasure hunt, including a free, downloadable teachers guide with classroom activities, head to www.atreasurestrove.com.

GOT A TIP?

Do you have an interesting story tip? Contact Cynthia Kopkowski at **ckopkowski@nea.org**.

PHOTO TOP: JAMIE MARTIN; PHOTOS BOTTOM—LEFT: *TIMES LEADER*, CENTER AND RIGHT: TREASURE TROVE INC.

Final Reports of Campaign Revenues and Expenses

NEA Standing Rule 12.E provides as follows:

Campaign Expenses. No portion of dues money collected at the local, regional, state, or national level shall be used to promote the candidacy of any individual for an NEA office.

Using forms provided by the Committee on Constitution, Bylaws, and Rules, each candidate shall file a preliminary report of campaign revenues and expenses, including projected revenues and expenses, with the committee prior to the opening of nominations at the Representative Assembly. A final report, on the forms provided by the committee, must be filed with the committee no later than thirty (30) days following certification of the election results. The committee shall report to the Representative Assembly, prior to any nominations or elections, whether any candidate has in any manner violated the election rules and regulations. The final report of campaign revenues and expenditures shall be printed in an appropriate NEA publication for inspection by any member.

The following reports were filed in a timely manner and are printed here pursuant to Rule 12.E.

Candidates are listed below by office and by alphabetical order within each office.

Candidate for Secretary-Treasurer

SOURCES OF REVENUE	
Cash	
Persons within the state	$403.00
Groups within the state	0
Persons outside the state	1,195.00
Groups outside the state	0
Income from raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	0
Donations in kind	100.00
TOTAL	$1,698.00
EXPENSES	
Printing	$720.55
Mailing	0
Other media materials	256.97
Hospitality and entertainment	0
Campaign Committee expenses	297.00
Giveaway(s), if any	0
Raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	0
TOTAL	$1,274.52

Signed: Lily Eskelsen

Candidates for NEA Executive Committee

SOURCES OF REVENUE	
Cash	
Persons within the state	$95.00
Groups within the state	0
Persons outside the state	200.00
Groups outside the state	4,300.00
Income from raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	0
Donations in kind	0
TOTAL	$4,595.00
EXPENSES	
Printing	$8,285.80
Mailing	12.70
Other media materials	0
Hospitality and entertainment	0
Campaign Committee expenses	886.72
Giveaway(s), if any	0
Raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	0
TOTAL	$9,185.22

Signed: Mark Cebulski

SOURCES OF REVENUE	
Cash	
Persons within the state	$560.00
Groups within the state	0
Persons outside the state	2,444.00
Groups outside the state	0
Income from raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	1,000.00
Donations in kind	0
TOTAL	$4,004.00
EXPENSES	
Printing	$1,098.19
Mailing	279.08
Other media materials	100.00
Hospitality and entertainment	50.00
Campaign Committee expenses	817.34
Giveaway(s), if any	1,469.37
Raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	50.00
TOTAL	$3,863.98

Signed: Carolyn Crowder

Candidates for NEA Director, ESP At-Large

SOURCES OF REVENUE	
Cash	
Persons within the state	$1,943.00
Groups within the state	0
Persons outside the state	0
Groups outside the state	0
Income from raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	510.00
Donations in kind	0
TOTAL	$2,453.00
EXPENSES	
Printing	$2,133.47
Mailing	20.00
Other media materials	0
Hospitality and entertainment	49.99
Campaign Committee expenses	500.54
Giveaway(s), if any	80.54
Raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	70.00
TOTAL	$2,854.54

Signed: Kay Hansen

SOURCES OF REVENUE

Cash	
Persons within the state	$0
Groups within the state	0
Persons outside the state	300.00
Groups outside the state	0
Income from raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	150.00
Donations in kind	1,800.00
TOTAL	$2,250.00

EXPENSES

Printing	$1,500.00
Mailing	79.00
Other media materials	294.00
Hospitality and entertainment	0
Campaign Committee expenses	287.00
Giveaway(s), if any	0
Raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	80.00
TOTAL	$2,240.00

Signed: Shirley Howard

SOURCES OF REVENUE

Cash	
Persons within the state	$900.00
Groups within the state	300.00
Persons outside the state	625.00
Groups outside the state	500.00
Income from raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	61.00
Donations in kind	0
TOTAL	$2,386.00

EXPENSES

Printing	$1,642.77
Mailing	14.53
Other media materials	82.86
Hospitality and entertainment	42.00
Campaign Committee expenses	433.00
Giveaway(s), if any	119.06
Raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	12.00
TOTAL	$2,346.22

Signed: Yolanda Molina

SOURCES OF REVENUE

Cash	
Persons within the state	$1,900.00
Groups within the state	0
Persons outside the state	0
Groups outside the state	0
Income from raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	0
Donations in kind	0
TOTAL	$1,900.00

EXPENSES

Printing	$1,341.78
Mailing	94.05
Other media materials	90.80
Hospitality and entertainment	130.00
Campaign Committee expenses	286.00
Giveaway(s), if any	0
Raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	0
TOTAL	$1,942.63

Signed: Michael Musser

SOURCES OF REVENUE

Cash	
Persons within the state	$437.00
Groups within the state	0
Persons outside the state	150.00
Groups outside the state	0
Income from raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	325.00
Donations in kind	0
TOTAL	$912.00

EXPENSES

Printing	$653.94
Mailing	121.26
Other media materials	0
Hospitality and entertainment	0
Campaign Committee expenses	172.17
Giveaway(s), if any	0
Raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	0
TOTAL	$947.37

Signed: Allyson "Sunny" Story

Candidates for NEA Director, Administrator At-Large

SOURCES OF REVENUE

Cash	
Persons within the state	$362.00
Groups within the state	0
Persons outside the state	0
Groups outside the state	0
Income from raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	0
Donations in kind	0
TOTAL	$362.00

EXPENSES

Printing	$168.00
Mailing	0
Other media materials	0
Hospitality and entertainment	0
Campaign Committee expenses	142.00
Giveaway(s), if any	0
Raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	0
TOTAL	$310.00

Signed: Zach Galvin

SOURCES OF REVENUE

Cash	
Persons within the state	$126.78
Groups within the state	0
Persons outside the state	0
Groups outside the state	0
Income from raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	0
Donations in kind	0
TOTAL	$126.78

EXPENSES

Printing	$40.00
Mailing	0
Other media materials	23.45
Hospitality and entertainment	0
Campaign Committee expenses	87.00
Giveaway(s), if any	0
Raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	0
TOTAL	$150.45

Signed: Gabriel Jacquez

SOURCES OF REVENUE

Cash	
Persons within the state	$15.00
Groups within the state	0
Persons outside the state	0
Groups outside the state	0
Income from raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	0
Donations in kind	0
TOTAL	$15.00

EXPENSES

Printing	$0
Mailing	0
Other media materials	0
Hospitality and entertainment	0
Campaign Committee expenses	150.00
Giveaway(s), if any	0
Raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	0
TOTAL	$150.00

Signed: Ignacio Salinas Jr.

Naomi

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IPNT0207 SB-21055-1206

To receive a grant, your idea doesn't have to be earthshaking, but it should rock your students' world.

Stephen Birmingham, Jim Christopher and Grace Konopacki, teachers in Wheeling, Illinois, had a great idea to help students learn through music. The NEA Foundation gave them funding to make it happen. Your idea could be grant worthy, too. Visit us online to learn more. Applications are now being accepted.

The NEA Foundation

www.neafoundation.org
202.822.7840

resources

54 **Grants & Awards** What's a fun essay contest for aspiring young writers? It's a mystery!
54 **Books by NEA Members** First-graders help their teacher cope with cancer.
55 **Take Note** A service-learning opportunity based on *Charlotte's Web*.
55 **A Blueprint for Success** Nine Principles of Educational Excellence.
56 **NEA's Read Across America** Get ready for our 10th Anniversary extravaganza.
59 **Heads Up from NEA Member Benefits** Free expert help to cope with identity theft.
60 **Black History Month** Resources to plan your lessons and events.
60 **Diversity Calendar** It's Mardi Gras—time to celebrate and try our recipe for pralines.
61 **In Print** A roundup of inspiring selections for Black History Month.
62 **On the Web** A free toolkit helps instructors design effective afterschool programs.
62 **On TV** From the History Channel, a dramatic account of the Lincoln assassination.

Recognizing Outstanding Library Humanities Programs

The Sara Jaffarian School Library Program Award recognizes an elementary or middle school library that has conducted an exemplary program or program series in the humanities during the prior school year. The annual award consists of a $4,000 cash prize, a plaque, and the promotion of the winner as a model program at a training opportunity for other school libraries. Any elementary or middle school library or any school library program in the United States serving children in any combination of grades K–8 is eligible for the award, which is sponsored by the American Library Association Cultural Communities Fund and the National Endowment for the Humanities, with the American Association of School Librarians.

Nomination forms can be found at **www.ala.org/ala/ppo/jaffarianaward.htm**. Mail the original and five copies to the Sara Jaffarian Award Committee, ALA Public Programs Office, 50 East Huron St., Chicago, IL 60611 by **February 27, 2007**.

REWARDING UNSUNG HEROES

The ING Unsung Heroes awards are given to K–12 educators pioneering new teaching methods and techniques that improve learning. Educators submit applications by describing projects they have initiated or would like to pursue. Each project is judged on its innovative method, creativity, and ability to positively influence students. Every year, 100 finalists are selected to receive a $2,000 award, payable to both the winning teacher and his or her school. At least one award is granted in each of the 50 states, provided at least one qualified application was received from each state. Winners are selected by Scholarship America, a national non-profit educational support and student aid service organization.

Of the 100 finalists, three are selected for additional awards: $25,000 for first place; $10,000 for second place; and $5,000 for third place. Full-time educators, teachers, principals, paraprofessionals, and classified staff members are eligible to apply. For more information, go to **www.ing-usa.com/us/aboutING/communityconnections/ineducation/unsungheroes/index.htm**. The deadline is **April 30, 2007**.

GRANTS FOR THE INVENTIVE

Lemelson-MIT InvenTeams grants foster inventiveness among high school students. InvenTeams composed of high school students, teachers, and mentors are asked to collaboratively identify a problem that they want to solve, research the problem, and then develop a prototype invention as an in-class or extracurricular project. Grants of up to $10,000 support each team's efforts. InvenTeams are encouraged to work with community partners, specifically the potential beneficiaries of their invention. High school science, math, and technology teachers—or teams of teachers—are eligible to apply. Inter- and intra-school collaborations are also welcome.

For more information, go to **http://web.mit.edu/inventeams/about.html**. The deadline is **April 27, 2007**.

PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

GRANTS FOR COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMS

Hamburger Helper wants to lend a helping hand to neighborhoods nationwide with its "My Hometown Helper" grant program. Individuals from communities and organizations across America, including public schools, can submit a written essay of 250 words or less describing how the grant would help improve their community project. Grant awards may be given up to $15,000. All requests for funding must be sponsored by a municipal or civic organization or public school. Go to **www.myhometownhelper.com/LearnMore.aspx** before **May 31, 2007**, when the program ends.

WHO DUNNIT? THE STUDENTS!

MWA:Reads, a Mystery Writers of America literacy program that encourages children and teens to read mysteries by joining authors with students, parents, teachers, and librarians, will hold its second annual Joan Lowery Nixon Award mystery writing contest. The contest allows students to use language arts skills and the power of imagination to create their own unique mystery stories. There are two age categories: grades 2–5 and grades 6–10. Only one story per student may be submitted. The entries will be judged in the area of creativity and proper use of English. The winner of each category will receive a $250 cash prize. Submissions for the contest will be accepted until **February 28, 2007**. For complete contest rules, visit **www.mysterywriters.org/MWAreads**.

WIN FREE PRESENTATION TOOLS

PLUS Vision Corp.'s "Education Spotlight" program gives a projector or electronic copyboard to a selected primary or secondary school. School teachers or administrators must complete an online application, stating the reasons why the equipment will enhance their students' education and submit unique examples of how they might use PLUS tools. At the end of each calendar year, PLUS Vision Corp. selects the recipient. For more information and to apply, go to **www.buyplusdirect.com/site/spotlight.html**.

NOW THAT'S ITALIAN

The National Italian American Foundation (NIAF) will present nearly 100 scholarships for the 2007–08 academic year to high school seniors, undergraduates, graduate students, or doctoral students across the country. Scholarships range from $2,000 to $15,000 each in the humanities, medicine, engineering, business, music, Italian language and culture, and other specialized fields.

Applicants must either be of Italian descent, with at least one ancestor who emigrated from Italy, or students of any ethnic background majoring or minoring in Italian language, Italian studies, Italian-American studies, or a related field. Winners are selected based on academic merit, and students must have a minimum GPA of 3.5 to apply.

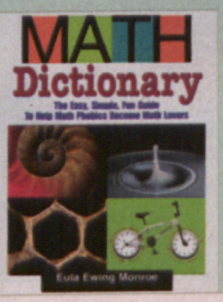
To apply for a NIAF scholarship, visit **www.niaf.org/scholarships**. The application deadline is **March 1, 2007**.

BOOKS BY NEA MEMBERS

MATH DICTIONARY: THE EASY, SIMPLE, FUN GUIDE TO HELP MATH PHOBICS BECOME MATH LOVERS

By Eula Ewing Monroe

This reference guide for students contains more than 500 common terms from core mathematics vocabulary. Written in simple language, illustrated with hundreds of photographs and drawings, and punctuated with fun "Did You Know?" facts, this helpful book aims to take the mystery out of math. Ages 12–adult. 206 pp. $19.95 from Boyds Mill Press. Go to www.boydsmillpress.com.



GET ORGANIZED WITHOUT LOSING IT

By Janet S. Fox

The "tweener" who can never find her homework, whose backpack is a jungle of papers, who forgets when assignments are due, and who doesn't know the first thing about managing complex projects would do well to read this breezy guide. From bringing order to a chaotic locker to tips for ignoring distractions during study time, this little book is chock full of practical ideas for kids to organize their lives and reduce stress. Grades 5–8. 105 pp. $8.95 from Free Spirit Publishing. To order, go to www.freespirit.com.

THE KIDS IN MRS. HILDEBRAND'S CLASS

By Linda Dallmann

The first-graders in Mrs. Hildebrand's class are busy and happy until cancer afflicts their beloved teacher. How can they help her recuperate? With help from their substitute teacher, they devise creative and loving ways to show that they care. This touching story demonstrates that even children can help grownups heal. Ages 9–12. 32 pp. $15 from Trafford Publishing. Go to www.trafford.com/06-0061.

EFFECTIVE CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT: SIX KEYS TO SUCCESS

By Dianne F. Bradley, Judith Ann Pauley, and Joseph F. Pauley

The authors of this guide offer strategies to manage classrooms and maximize student potential based on positive student-teacher relationships and knowledge of each student's personality type. Included are true stories of improved academic performance and decreases in negative behaviors. 148 pp. $24.95 from Rowman & Littlefield Education. To order, go to www.rowmaneducation.com.

Take Note

NEA Friend of Education Awards

The Friend of Education Award is the Association's highest honor and may be bestowed on an individual or organization whose leadership acts or support have significantly benefited education, education employees, or students on a national scale. Letters of nomination must include the name of the nominee; nominee's position and/or organizational affiliation; nominee's mailing address (or organization mailing address); name of the nominator or affiliate; signature of nominator or affiliate officer; name of nominator's local affiliate (if applicable); and nominator's mailing address and telephone number. If the nominator is an NEA member, send proof of membership (e.g., an *NEA Today* mailing label with membership number).

In 100 words or less, indicate the reason for your nomination and summarize the nominee's qualifications. Nominees will be evaluated based on leadership, acts, and support of education on a national scale. Supporting materials, such as publications or videos, may be submitted along with the nomination information. Submit all nomination information and materials to: NEA Friend of Education Award Committee, Executive Office, Attn: Joyce Parker, National Education Association, 1201 16th St. NW, Washington, DC 20036. You may also fax the information to **(202) 822-7974.**

Buy Stuff, Get Good Karma

Giveline.com is an online store created for the community-minded shopper. Every transaction generates a financial contribution to your favorite charity—between 7 and 33 percent of product sales. The site features discounts, however, shoppers can waive the discount and pay full price, increasing the charitable contribution generated by the transaction. What can you buy? Books, movies, music, video games, electronics, home and garden items, and more. Go to **www.giveline.com**.

A Web of Friendship

With the "Become a True Friend" program from F.I.L.M. (Finding Inspiration in Literature and Movies), *Charlotte's Web*—the recent Paramount Pictures release—becomes a service-learning vehicle for students ages 8–12. Youth are encouraged to read the book by E.B. White and see the movie; participate in activities from a free downloadable guide; and complete a project. Themes addressed include becoming a true friend, generosity, embracing change and coping with loss, farm life, and appreciating diversity. Participants who complete an online evaluation will be entered into a periodic drawing for the book and a DVD of the film. For more details, go to **www.youthfilmproject.org/film/charlottesweb.htm**.

ILLUSTRATION: *CHARLOTTE'S WEB* © 2006 BY PARAMOUNT PICTURES

Nine Principles *of* Educational Excellence

In December 1984, the NEA Board of Directors adopted the Action Plan for Educational Excellence, spelling out nine principles that should guide the NEA's efforts to raise the quality of American education.

Students must master what is taught.
The objective of education should be a demonstrated grasp of fundamentals, the competent use of skills, and command over subject matter, not mere passing grades. Mastery of what is taught must be America's standard of educational excellence, and schools need to offer the comprehensive curriculum and provide the time and resources that can make this mastery an achievable goal.

Students must be active participants in learning.
Students must become questioners and explorers, not just passive recipients of information. That active involvement demands learning environments free from disruptive behavior and learning activities designed to encourage student initiative.

Full learning opportunities must be available for all students.
All students must be provided learning opportunities that enable them to fully realize their individual potential, regardless of their economic, social, physical, or psychological condition.

Learning should occur throughout life.
Appropriate opportunities for learning must be available in all school districts for all age groups.

Authority must be vested in the local faculty.
Key decisions about teaching and learning should be made by those closest to students and the community, not by large bureaucracies whose assembly-line approach diminishes expectations of students and teachers.

School staff must be professionally compensated.
Salaries in education must become commensurate with those in comparable professions if the nation is to attract and retain the best teachers.

There must be high standards for teacher preparation and practice.
Professional competence must be rooted in intellectually stimulating and demanding teacher preparation programs, rigorous personnel evaluation procedures, and meaningful professional and staff development programs.

School/community resources must be coordinated to benefit students.
Problems that affect students' ability to learn must be resolved by school/community collaboration and coordination.

Financial support to achieve educational excellence is required.
Excellence in education depends on the combined resources of federal, state, and local governments.

Happy 10th Anniversary, Read Across America

Ten years ago, NEA and its members started a reading revolution. From a one-day celebration of Dr. Seuss's birthday to a year-round literacy campaign reaching nearly every home, school, and community, NEA's Read Across America is building a nation of readers. Here's how you can get involved.

FOLLOW THE READER

Whether it's a Seuss-a-fied birthday party, breakfast of green eggs and ham, or a reading parade, begin your reading roadtrip with a stop at **www.nea.org/readacross**.

10TH ANNIVERSARY TOOLKIT

Map out your plans with our online planning guide. You'll find posters, certificates, planning tips, and more.

CHOOSE YOUR BOOKS

From Seuss to Lemony Snicket, oh, the places you'll go when you read. Look for booklists galore on our Web site!

PICK A PARTNER

Need a little help along the way? Read Across America partners are ready with resources, volunteers, book donations, and more.

MAKE IT MULTICULTURAL

From *Lea con La NEA* materials to multicultural booklists, NEA's Read Across America will help your outreach to minority communities.

PLEDGE, PLEDGE, PLEDGE

Planning a great event? We want to hear all about it. Fill out your online pledge and then find out what your colleagues across the country have planned.

ALERT THE MEDIA

Check out the tips and tricks to making the news—from reading forecasts by local meteorologists to news anchor appearances. You'll also find sample press releases and photo guidelines.

READ AND WIN

Think your reading event or project deserves recognition? NEA is seeking the largest, most unusual events in each NEA region at the preK, elementary, middle, and high school levels. We'll also honor Books Across America donors.

STOP AND SHOP

Looking for Cat in the Hat hats? Go to the NEA Professional Library at **http://store.nea.org** to find everything you need.

PAUSE FOR PROJECT 236

Set your watch to 2:36 p.m. ET on March 2 and join millions reading *The Cat in the Hat*.

This record-breaking attempt partners with First Book's mission to help low-income children. See more at **www.catinthehat.com**.

STAY CONNECTED

Sign up for our monthly e-newsletter, providing the latest literacy news from programs to tips on reaching minority communities.

GIVE THE GIFT OF READING

In 2006, NEA, together with The NEA Foundation, First Book, and The Heart of America Foundation, launched NEA's Books Across America, a groundbreaking initiative to provide funds and books for school libraries in need. In 2007, NEA's Books Across America goes national, helping school libraries around the country. Go to **www.nea.org/booksacross**.

KEEP READING ON YOUR ROADMAP ALL YEAR LONG

Find out about the programs and partnerships that keep reading front and center all year long, from Get a Kick Out of Reading to Drop Everything and Read.

March 2, 2007
www.nea.org/readacross

PHOTOS STARTING AT TOP RIGHT: ANTONY RUGGIERO; LEN SPODEN

EDUCATION MARKET

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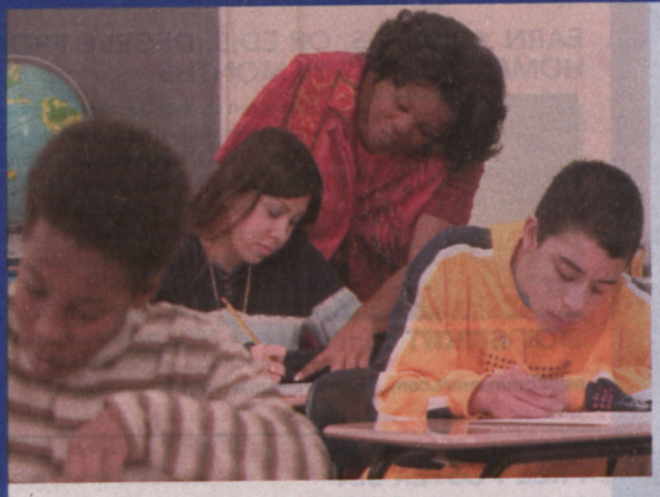

Tom Joyner Foundation & The National Education Association:

Moving Teachers Toward Full Licensure!

The Foundation and the National Education Association believe that pre-K through 12 curriculum should be taught by licensed teachers. We recognize that in certain urban, suburban, and rural communities not every teacher is licensed. In an effort to help teachers become fully licensed, the Foundation and NEA agreed to join forces to assist teachers who desire to gain full licensure. The unprecedented program is designed to increase the number of fully-certified minority teachers around the country to strengthen America's teaching force.

During the 2005-2006 school year, the Foundation provided financial assistance and NEA provided technical assistance and expertise to nearly 300 teachers in seven states supporting their participation in coursework and workshops. The program also paid for materials and individual tutoring to help teachers prepare for state licensure examinations.

Today, the partnership is looking to increase the number of participating Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and expand the program to help more teachers obtain full licensure.

Stay tuned for updated information via the *NEA Today* and the NEA website www.nea.org.

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Great Public Schools for Every Child

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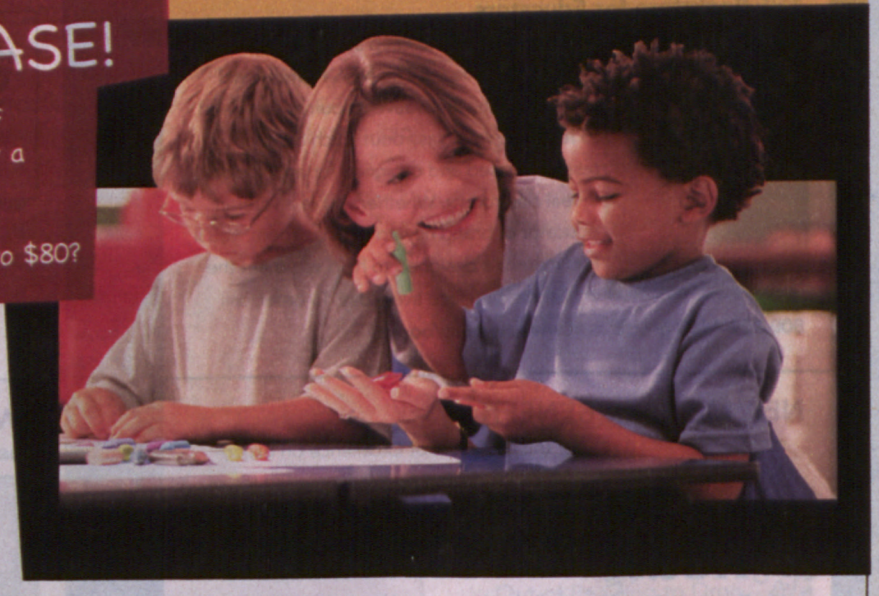
Did you know that as a former member of the NEA Student Program, you qualify for a rebate of your student membership dues?

Did you know the rebate could equal up to $80?



Here's how it works:

- Begin your first year employed by a public school system
- Join the local association as an NEA member that very first year
- Send your application for the rebate by May 1st
- Receive your check as a thank you for continuing your membership in the NEA

Check out www.nea.org/student-program/membership for a copy of the Rebate Application.

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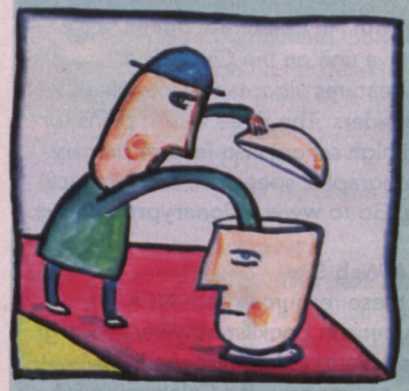

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1. Home equity loans and lines of credit are available through Wells Fargo Consumer Credit Group, a division of Wells Fargo Bank, N.A.
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NEA-Retired Teacher
Baugo Community School
Elkhart, Indiana

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The Political Action Committee of the National Education Association

NEA-Retired

NEA-Retired announces its newest publication to help improve teacher quality and retention. NEA-Retired's **Intergenerational Mentoring Toolkit** provides NEA state affiliates, locals, and Student Program chapters with a vital tool for implementing its mentoring program. Unlike other such resources, the NEA-Retired toolkit uses the skills and wisdom of retired educators to guide students of education from their Praxis exam to their first year in the classroom. Free from peer pressure or evaluation oversight, Retired mentors offer a unique perspective on the challenges facing beginning teachers.

Contact NEA-Retired or your state affiliate for a copy of the new toolkit.

ILLUSTRATION: GETTY IMAGES/PHOTO: JOHN MILLER

Black History Month

Begun in 1926 through the efforts of Black scholar and historian Carter G. Woodson, Black History Month was originally celebrated as a weeklong event. In 1976, Congress expanded the observance to the entire month of February. These resources, including links to NEA's Web site, will help you plan your own observances. Other resources can be found in the In Print section (opposite) and the On TV section (page 62).

Background photograph of Mississippi Delta children by Dorothea Lange for the Farm Security Administration-Office of War Information July 1936

Encyclopedia Britannica's Guide to Black History boasts a large collection of articles, galleries with hundreds of images, and film and audio clips. Classroom activities and teacher guides are included. Go to **http://search.eb.com/blackhistory**.

African-American World weaves together resources from PBS archives, including articles and interviews from *All Things Considered, Morning Edition, Talk of the Nation,* and the *Tavis Smiley Show,* to create an online mosaic of African-American history and culture. Go to **www.pbs.org/wnet/aaworld**.

The History of Jim Crow takes the viewer on a tour of the struggles of a people to transcend oppression. You'll find literature, eyewitness accounts, maps, and image galleries that explore the segregation, disenfranchisement, and violence that lay at the heart of the Jim Crow experience. Lesson plans are available. Go to **www.jimcrowhistory.org**.

We Shall Overcome—Historic Places of the Civil Rights Movement focuses on key locations associated with one of the most important chapters in our history. Follow a National Register of Historic Places itinerary through 49 locations in 21 states, as well as the Selma-to-Montgomery Historic Trail. Go to **www.cr.nps.gov/nr/travel/civilrights**.

Mighty Times—The Legacy of Rosa Parks, a free teaching kit for middle and upper grades, uses first person accounts and stirring dramatizations to bring to life the story of the "mother of the civil rights movement." An award-winning film, a teaching guide, and classroom activities are included. Go to **www.tolerance.org/teach/resources/mighty_times.jsp**.

Integrating with All Deliberate Speed, a comprehensive unit on the Civil Rights Movement, features videotaped interviews with legendary leaders. The three lesson plans for middle and high school also feature primary source photographs, speeches, and historical documents. Go to **www.visionaryproject.org**.

On the NEA Web Site

Check out these resources from NEA.org:

- African-American booklist at **www.nea.org/readacross/resources/afambooks.html**.
- "Horizons of Opportunity: Celebrating 50 years of *Brown v. Board of Education*" at **www.nea.org/brownvboard/index2.html**.
- "American Teachers Association: The Story of the ATA and the NEA" at **www.nea.org/events/ATA.html**.

DIVERSITY CALENDAR

FEBRUARY

FEBRUARY 12—LINCOLN'S BIRTHDAY
Our 16th and arguably most popular president was born this day in 1809 in Hardin County, Kentucky.

FEBRUARY 14—VALENTINE'S DAY
Dating from the Roman feast of Lupercalia, this day has also been used by Christians to honor St. Valentine, a martyr. Today, many take time to show affection to loved ones.

FEBRUARY 16—MAHASHIVARATRI
Observed by Hindus, this feast is a remembrance of the night when Lord Shiva is said to have performed the dance of primordial creation, preservation, and destruction.

FEBRUARY 20—MARDI GRAS
Fat Tuesday customs include wearing beads, donning elaborate masks and costumes, attending balls and parades, and feasting and frolicking far into the night.

MARCH

MARCH 8—INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY
This day commemorates the historic 1857 garment and textile workers' strike in New York, one of the first organized actions by women anywhere.

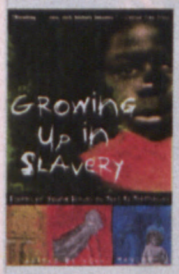
MARCH 10—HARRIET TUBMAN'S DEATH
Born into slavery, Tubman freed herself and dedicated her life to freeing others and advancing the rights of Blacks.

MARCH 20—SPRING EQUINOX
Observed and celebrated for thousands of years by many cultures and religions, the first day of spring sees the sun directly above the equator and is characterized by 12 hours of darkness and light.

MARCH 21—BAHÁ'Í NEW YEAR (NAW-RÚZ)
Celebrated at the spring equinox, this is one of nine holy days of the year when work and school are suspended for those of the Bahá'í faith.

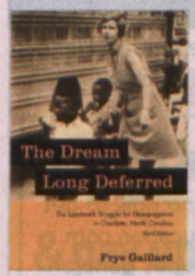
In Print

SURVIVING SLAVERY—YOUNG PEOPLE SPEAK



Excerpted from original slave narratives, this riveting and heartbreaking collection presents the stories of 10 young African-Americans, all under the age of 19, who were born in chains and lived to write about their experiences. ***Growing Up in Slavery,*** edited by Yuval Taylor, presents an unvarnished look at an institutional horror and the triumph of a people over adversity. For young adults. $9.95. 256 pp. from Lawrence Hill Books. To order, go to www.ipgbook.com.

INTEGRATION IN JEOPARDY



The Dream Long Deferred: The Landmark Struggle for Desegregation in Charlotte, North Carolina by Frye Gaillard tells the compelling, 55-year story of the historic battle for desegregation, and presents a sobering look at the present state of Charlotte's public school system. 215 pp. $34.95 from the University of South Carolina Press. To order, go to www.sc.edu/uscpress.

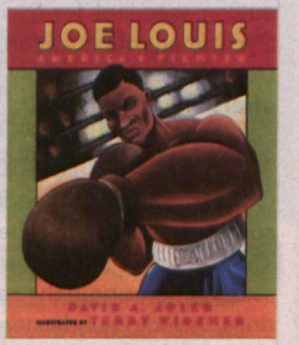
GIVE THE MAN A HAND

This Jazz Man by Karen Ehrhardt gives a familiar tune a swinging makeover: *This jazz man, he plays five, he plays bebop, he plays jive!* A paean to a particularly American musical idiom, this lively book pays homage to 10 jazz greats, and includes short biographies at the end. Ages 3–7. 32 pp. $16 from Harcourt Children's Books. Go to www.harcourtbooks.com to order.

ALL THE COLORS OF FREEDOM

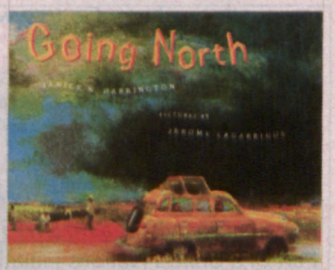
Based on a true story from slave narratives, ***Night Boat to Freedom*** by Margot Theis Raven tells of Christmas John, a 12-year-old boy who risks his life rowing other slaves to freedom, but can he save his grandmother and himself? Illustrated with gorgeous watercolors. Grades 2–6. 40 pp. $16 from Farrar, Straus and Giroux. To order, go to www.fsgkidsbooks.com.

A HERO IN AND OUT OF THE RING



Joseph Louis Barrow, a grandson of slaves, grew up to survive racism and the Great Depression and became a world heavyweight boxing champion and World War II hero to millions of Americans of all races. The forceful text and powerful illustrations in David A. Adler's ***Joe Louis, America's Fighter*** portray the drama of his eventful and iconic life. Ages 6–9. 32 pp. $16 from Gulliver Books/ Harcourt. To order, go to www.harcourtbooks.com.

PIONEERS IN A NEW WORLD



In ***Going North***, by Janice N. Harrington, Jessie and her family pack their old station wagon and leave the familiar world of 1960s Alabama for a new life "up North." Lyrical prose poetry conveys the Black family's fears and hopes as they drive to a better future. Grades 2–4. 40 pp. $16 from Farrar, Straus and Giroux. Go to www.fsgkidsbooks.com.

Diversity Recipe

PRALINES

That's PRAH-leens, *Cher,* not PRAY-leens. When you're in New Orleans celebrating Mardi Gras, you'll find street vendors and shops selling these delectable sweets from one end of the *Vieux Carré* (French Quarter) to the other. Originating in France, the candy traveled to New Orleans where it was embraced by local cooks and adapted for available ingredients. Sinfully rich (not an everyday treat), pralines can be dressed up with chocolate, coconut, peanut butter, even bourbon, but the basic recipe is delicious and simple to make.

Ingredients
2 cups heavy cream
4 cups brown sugar
1 tsp vanilla
2 cups pecan halves
2 Tbsp butter
butter to grease saucepan

Butter a medium saucepan. Pour in cream and place over high heat. When it begins to boil, add sugar and stir until dissolved. Add vanilla and pecans and lower heat to medium. Stir frequently until mixture reaches the softball stage (236° on a candy thermometer). Remove from heat and quickly beat in butter. The candy will lose its glossy color and become cloudy. Lay out a long strip of waxed paper on a work surface and moisten with a damp towel. Working quickly and stirring the mixture frequently, drop large spoonfuls onto the waxed paper. (*Careful—it's hot!*) Remove pralines before they cool completely. Store in a tightly covered container between sheets of waxed paper. Makes 24 pralines.

PHOTO: SOUTHERNANGEL.COM

On the Web

FREE AFTERSCHOOL TOOLKIT

A new online toolkit gives afterschool program directors and instructors the resources to build fun, innovative, and enriching afterschool activities that engage students, extend knowledge, and increase academic achievement. Each subject area—arts, literacy, math, science, technology, and homework help—is filled with standards-based multimedia resources, such as research-based practices, sample lessons, interactive activities, and video segments. Whatever your level of experience, you'll find useful practices and lessons plus how-to instructions and outcomes to look for. Sponsored by WGBH, The U.S. Department of Education, and Southwest Educational Development Laboratory. Go to **www.sedl.org/afterschool/toolkits**.

MEDS AND MIDDLE-SCHOOLERS

Children start to self-medicate at about age 11 or 12, and some who babysit may be asked to medicate younger children. The Medicines in My Home program was designed to teach sixth-graders about the safe use of over-the-counter medications, including understanding the Drug Facts label and sharing information with families. A lesson plan and teacher kit are included that integrate with learning objectives related to home safety, medicines and common health problems, or consumer products. Go to **www.fda.gov/medsinmyhome**.

PORTRAITS OF GREATNESS

Online resources from the Smithsonian Portrait Gallery (like this painting of choreographer Martha Graham by Paul Meltsner) offer a highly visual way to learn about people who have impacted history and culture. Exhibits include a survey of 2,000 years of Latin American portraiture, modern American drawings, daguerreotypes by African-American photographer Augustus Washington, a retrospective of the life of Ernest Hemingway, and photographs by the legendary Henri Cartier-Bresson. Most exhibits include teacher guides. Go to **www.npg.si.edu/educate2/educate2.htm**.

BUTCHER, BAKER, CANDLESTICK MAKER

Students wondering which career to choose and how to get there can find free information at Careers&Education.com. From the arts to technology, the Web site includes general information about required degrees and certificates, finding financial aid, typical salaries, and tips on the hottest industries and high-paying jobs. Go to **www.careersandeducation.com**.

On TV

DIARY OF JAY-Z: WATER FOR LIFE

MTV, February 5, 4 a.m. ET/PT.

Part of a United Nations initiative, this documentary follows rapper and record executive Jay-Z to several regions around the globe that are affected by the world water crisis. Can be taped and used in the classroom for one year.

BLACK AVIATORS: FLYING FREE

History Channel, February 5, 6 a.m. ET/PT.

This program explores how African-American men and women overcame discrimination to become pioneers in aviation. Can be taped and used in the classroom for two years.

NOVA: FORGOTTEN GENIUS

PBS, February 6, 8 p.m. ET/PT. Check local listings.

This two-hour documentary looks at the life of African-American inventor and chemist Percy Julian. Born in 1899 in Montgomery, Alabama, Julian showed an early interest in science, especially chemistry. He studied organic chemistry in Vienna, Austria, earning his Ph.D. in 1931. After returning to the states, Julian taught at Black colleges before moving to private industry. Some of his inventions include a flame-retardant foam that saved many lives during World War II and synthetic hormones that help pregnant women carry to term. Don't miss this story of a man who overcame every obstacle to become a world-class scientist, a self-made millionaire, philanthropist, and a civil rights pioneer.

NICK NEWS WITH LINDA ELLERBEE: STORIES FROM THE DREAM

Nickelodeon, February 16, 6 a.m. ET/PT.

Explore the impact of Black history on the present and future through interviews with several prominent African-Americans. Tape and use in the classroom for 10 years.

THE LINCOLN ASSASSINATION

History Channel, February 28 & March 1, 6 a.m. ET/PT.

This two-part program examines the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. Can be taped and used in class for two years. Teaching materials are available at www.historychannel.com/classroom.

On TV listings are provided by KIDSNET, a national resource for children's media in Washington, D.C., www.kidsnet.org, and Cable in the Classroom's Access Learning *magazine at www.ciconline.org.*

PHOTOS BOTTOM LEFT: LOLITA PARKER FOR NOVA/WGBH BOSTON; RIGHT: USAMHI

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A Different Kind of Service

One teacher shares lessons from Afghanistan.

BY TIM SMART

Relationships, coaching, mentoring—these words drive my focus each day in Kunduz Province in northeast Afghanistan.

It's a beautiful, mountainous area where the valleys are heavily cultivated and sheep and goats consume most of the wild grass. Melon fields and fruit trees grow along the province's major north-south highway, which is a lane-and-a-half and mostly paved.

Nearly all of Afghanistan's 10 ethnic groups are represented here, but the majority are Tajiks and Uzbeks, not the Pashtuns from whom the Taliban draw most of their support. This province is anti-Taliban and generally friendly to westerners.

I have been here since last June on a 12-month tour, helping the new Afghan National Army (ANA) sustain its operations with fuel, food, training, water, and ammunition. I am away from my wife of 21 years and my three beautiful children, living in a dangerous, remote region.

Despite 20-plus years of military training, nothing could have prepared me for being here. It is learn as you go.

In the States, I am a special education teacher who helps students build on their strengths to overcome their struggles in reading, writing, and math. In a way, my work here is very similar. Patience is a daily theme.

The Afghan National Army was formed from groups of former anti-Taliban guerrillas, officers educated by the Soviet Union in the 1970s and 1980s, and anti-Soviet mujahideen leaders. Long-term planning is a new concept for them. In their recent past, what you had in your pocket is what you survived on, so events several months away are irrelevant. As with my middle school students, I relate long-range goals to the current situation to make it relevant.

There isn't much open warfare here, but I have gone on combat missions with the ANA, mostly apprehending anti-government fighters, demonstrating presence, and gathering information. We also participate in missions to separate warring factions.

Only 10 to 15 percent of my time is spent helping with community-building and schools, but that work is especially important to me. I am drawn to the children, always looking for ways to help a school.

The smiles we get when we visit make the long separation from my family bearable.

Of the 250 schools in Kunduz province, 143 are outdoors. They have one-tenth of what they need in the way of paper, chalkboards, maps, and teachers. At one school I visited, the building was one room of about 1,000 square feet, with 200 students in four classes all learning at the same time. About 42 percent of the country's 5,800 teachers are female, as are one-third of the students.

Children in Afghanistan desire to go to school, and their families want them to. Five years ago, there were 15 schools in the provincial capital, but now there are 134. Where the Taliban are strong, school burnings are common, but here, we have had only four. Of course, that is four too many.

There is a drastic need here to support and nurture the next generation, the children. First, they need peace and stability. Then, they need to advance economically so they can spend time and effort on education. Today, the country is so poor that most children have only a few years to study before they must go to work as farmers, herders, and shopkeepers. I am amazed at how resilient the people are, considering how much war and hardship they have seen. I have certainly learned more from them than they from me.

My Guard duty has led to some surprising moments that fill me with hope. A few years ago, I taught an angry young man. He and I worked through his frustration and difficulty in academics, one subject at a time. We began to connect once he saw he could trust me. Military training helped me handle his outbursts calmly and settle him down.

After I was called up last year, I started exercising to get into shape. (I've lost 60 pounds!) One day, I walked into the gym at the base where I was training and heard a familiar voice: "Mr. Smart, what are you doing here, sir?" My former student and I were both amazed. He had joined the Guard and is now serving in Kabul.

Seeing how my former student is making a difference reminded me that I am, too.

Tim Smart is a major in the National Guard, on leave from his job as a middle school special educator in Portland, Oregon.

PHOTO: SAYED ZAFAR HAZIN, ANA

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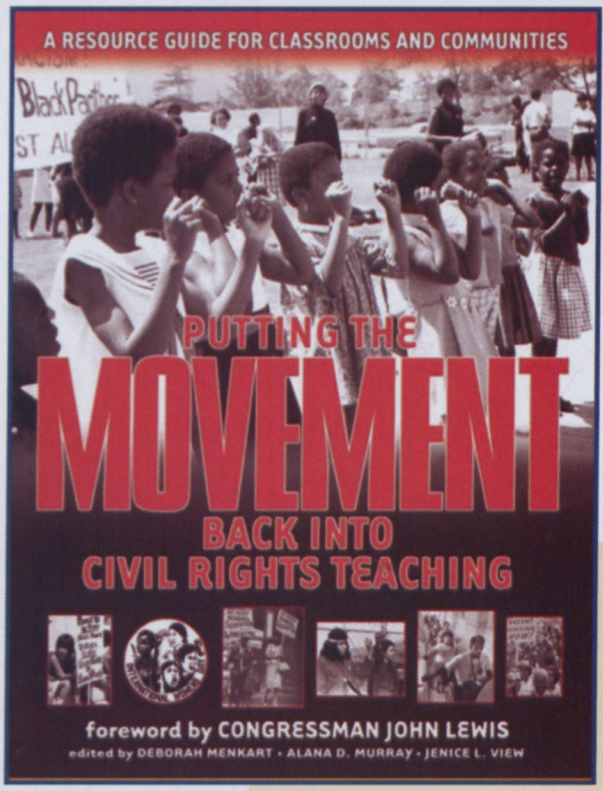
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Happy 10th Anniversary NEA's Read Across America!

Ten years ago, NEA and its members started a reading revolution. From a one-day celebration of Dr. Seuss's birthday to a year-round literacy campaign reaching nearly every home, school, and community, NEA's Read Across America is building a nation of readers. Here's how you can get involved.

Follow the Reader

Whether it's a Seuss-a-fied birthday party, breakfast of green eggs and ham, or sensational reading parade, begin your reading roadtrip with a stop at NEA's Read Across America Web site, www.nea.org/readacross.

Tenth Anniversary Toolkit

Map out your plans with our online planning guide. You'll find posters, certificates, planning tips, and more.

Choose Your Books

From Seuss to Lemony Snicket, Oh, the places you'll go when you read. Look for booklists galore and don't forget to vote for your favorite book.

Pick a Partner

Need a little help along the way? Read Across America partners are ready with resources, volunteers, book donations, and more.

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Looking for Cat in the Hat hats? Go to the NEA Professional Library store to find everything you need for your event.

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Set your March 2 watch to 2:36 p.m. ET and join millions of students and educators in reading *The Cat in the Hat*. This record-breaking attempt helps RAA partner First Book's mission to help low-income children. Go to www.catinthehat.com.

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Sign up for the Read Across America monthly e-newsletter, providing the latest literacy news, from programs to tips on reaching minority communities.

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In 2006, NEA, together with The NEA Foundation, First Book, and The Heart of America Foundation, launched NEA's Books Across America, a groundbreaking initiative to provide funds and books for school libraries in need. In 2007, NEA's Books Across America goes national, helping school libraries around the country. Go to www.nea.org/booksacross.

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